



Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter

This publication honours and continues the tradition started by Don Daber in 1960.
Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter is published quarterly.

The Toronto Optimists History website celebrates:

The Toronto Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps 1958 - 1975 | The Seneca Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps 1976 - 1978

Published by Bob Carell. Please direct inquiries to: Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com
A PDF version is available on the website: www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca



ISSUE 10 April 2023

In this issue

- 2 Be a contributor
- 3 What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website



- 5 **FEATURE ARTICLE**
Toronto Signals Band
- 21 "From Toronto...
The Optimists!"
Chapters 19 and 20
Some Scores
Pg 36: from 1969
Pg 47: from 1970
- 48 **SPOTLIGHT**
*A personal recollection:
The Viscounts Drum &
Bugle Corps - Montréal*
- 50 **Recollections from
Stephanie Cooper**
- 55 **Looking back at 69**
By Brian Hogan
- 58 **The Rifles**
*Those who carried
the Lee-Enfield rifles*
- 64 **We Remember:**
Noel Bramley
- 65 **The Last Page**

Contribute to your newsletter

Send your suggestions, stories or articles to Bob: toronto_optimist@rogers.com or David: openrd2002@yahoo.ca

We publish four issues each year: January, April, July and October.

IMPORTANT:
The Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter is ONLY available in Acrobat (PDF) format.

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ISSUE 10 April 2023

In this issue

- Be a contributor
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
Toronto Signals Band
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 19 and 20
Some Scores
Pg 38: from 1959
Pg 47: from 1970
- SPOTLIGHT**
A personal recollection:
The Vicounts Drum & Bugle Corps - Montreal
Recollections from
Stephanie Cooper
- Looking back at 69
By Brian Hogan
- The Rifles
Those who carried the Lee-Enfield rifles
- The Last Page



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Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 9 January 2023

In this issue

- Be a contributor
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
The Optimists' Drum & Bugle Corps 1968 - 1975
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 17 and 18
Some Scores
Pg 38: from 1962
Pg 46: from 1967
Pg 57: from 1968
- Spotlight: The Hytlers**
Creation of the Associated Jr. Corps
- Recollections from Brian Hogan, Don Daber, Doug McNeil, John Flynn, Mike Fry, Phil Rowland, WE REMEMBER
Ken Poole
- The Last Page

9. January 2023

10. April 2023

Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 1 JANUARY 2021

In this issue

- Welcome
- The answers are...
- Recollections
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
What keeps us connected?
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 1 and 2
- White Paper
- We Remember
- The Last Page

1. January 2021

Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 2 APRIL 2021

In this issue

- Introduction
- Welcome to the Optimists' drum line
- Recollections from Jerry Gird
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
Optimists Drumline from 1962 to 1975
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 3 and 4
- Memories
- Phil Rowland
- Don Daber
- We Remember
- We Get Around
- The Last Page

2. April 2021

Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 3 JULY 2021

In this issue

- Introduction
- Website Trivia
- Recollections
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- Regina Hall of Fame
- Don Daber
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 5 and 6
- Recollections
- Some 1968 Scores
- Phil Rowland
- We Remember
- We Get Around
- The Last Page

3. July 2021

Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 4 OCTOBER 2021

In this issue

- Introduction
- Be a contributor
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
Foster Scout House
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 7 and 8
- Some 1968 Scores
- Recollections from Phil Rowland, John Flynn, Mike Fry, Don Daber, and Jerry Gird
- WE REMEMBER
- Chris Taylor
- The Last Page

4. October 2021

Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 5 JANUARY 2022

In this issue

- Introduction
- Be a contributor
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
De La Salle Middle School
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 9 and 10
- Some 1968 Scores
- Recollections from Don Daber, John Flynn, Mike Fry, and Jerry Gird
- WE REMEMBER
- John Flynn
- The Last Page

5. January 2022

Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 6 APRIL 2022

In this issue

- Introduction
- Be a contributor
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
Celia LaSalle
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 11 and 12
- Some 1962 Scores
- SPOTLIGHT**
The Seneca Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps
- Recollections from old GCCO members
- WE REMEMBER
- John Flynn
- The Last Page

6. April 2022

Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 7 JULY 2022

In this issue

- Be a contributor
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
John Flynn
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 13 and 14
- Spotlight: The Seneca Optimists Drum & Bugle Corps
- Regina Hall of Fame
- Don Daber
- We Remember
- John Flynn
- The Last Page

7. July 2022

Toronto Optimists History-Newsletter
ISSUE 8 OCTOBER 2022

In this issue

- Be a contributor
- What's new on the Toronto Optimists History website
- FEATURE ARTICLE**
Optimists Funder Book
- "From Toronto... The Optimists!"**
Chapters 15 and 16
- Some Scores
- Recollections from Don Daber, John Flynn, Mike Fry, and Jerry Gird
- WE REMEMBER
- John Flynn
- The Last Page

8. October 2022



WEBSITE ADDITIONS

Additions to both the Main website and the Photo Gallery continue to be made. New photos are added to the gallery about twice each week.



LaSalle Cadets (Big 10 prelims, Hamilton, 1972)

WEBSITE UPDATE: What's new on TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca

We continue to update our Photo Gallery with images from the competitive years. This usually happens a couple of times each week. In addition to photos of the Toronto Optimists and the Seneca Optimists, I am continuing to include photos of other corps, mostly from Ontario, that competed in the old days. Just to mix things up a bit, I've recently added a few images of Buttons from other drum corps.

This page contains two photos that have recently been added to the Photo Gallery. There's already a wealth of information on the main website so it's difficult to know what to add. As I obtain old issues of GCC I will scan them and post them on the website. And, of course, "We Remember" pages will be posted as corps members pass away. If anyone has suggestions for new material that will improve the website, please let us know.



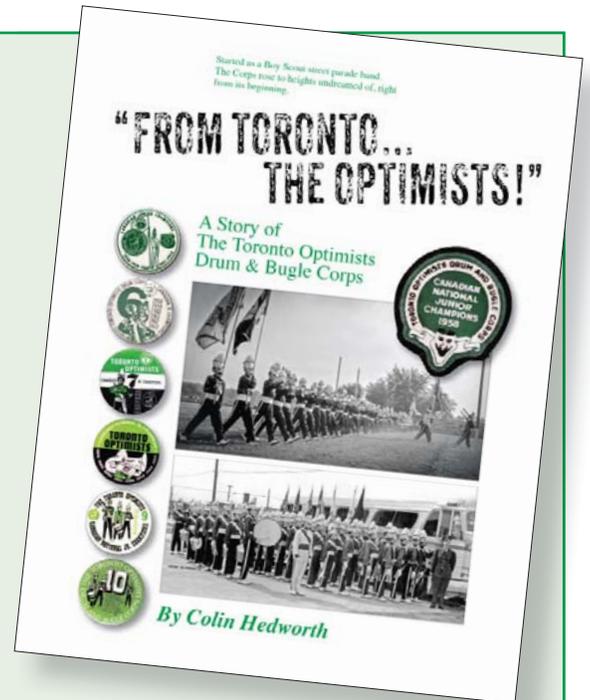
Cardinals (1978)

In our next newsletter: Chapters 21 and 22

The next issue of the Newsletter (July) will include Chapters 21 and 22 from Colin Hedworth's book "From Toronto... The Optimists!".

The focus of Chapter 21. The year began with a disappointing C.D.C.A. convention that led to four corps (Optimists, De La Salle, Midlanders and Compagnons) leaving the Association and, of course, the fallout from that decision. For the Optimists, the year had a disastrous beginning with the Scarborough Firefighters, a fledgling Junior "A" corps, beating the Optimists. At the Shriners contest, a week later, Optimists came in last, almost 17 points behind the first place 27th Lancers. Given the C.D.C.A. situation there was no CDCA Nationals; however, there was a National Junior Invitational won by De La Salle with Optimists in second place.

Chapter 22 covers the 1972 season. This year the Optimists had a stronger corps; however, for most of the year they played second fiddle to De La Salle. The Optimists worked hard all season and the corps kept improving, narrowing the gap between themselves and De La Salle. The day before Nationals, at the Big 10 contest in Hamilton, that work payed off when the Optimists, for the first time in 1972, defeated Del. The very next day, at Nationals at the CNE in Toronto, the Optimists, once again, beat Del, taking home their 12th National title.



Toronto Optimists (US Open Championships, Marion, Ohio, 1972)

The book "From Toronto... The Optimists!" is out of print.

The Toronto Signals Band

*Adapted from an article by E. (Ted) Blight.
Ted joined the Signals Band in 1984 and served on
the executive committee for many years*

Background

The military used both drums and bugles for centuries to sound various calls, both in camp and during battle. It was a convenient and effective method of sending identifiable messages (i.e., Signals) to large groups of troops over an effective range. Today, bugle calls are mostly ceremonial, including General Salute, Last Post, Reveille, etc.

The Early Years

The 2nd Divisional Signals Trumpet Band began in 1926, but there are no photos from that time. The first known photograph of the Band is from November 1932. Other than that, little information is available. The earliest history is mostly word of mouth, passed down by the family of Harvey

Longstreet, whose family includes four generations of members.

Two 2nd Divisional Signals Bands actually existed in 1932, the Trumpet Band and a Brass Band. The Brass Band, however, included unionized musicians who also paraded as the Army & Navy Veterans Band. In 1934, the Commanding Officer, Col.



Conover, questioned the Brass Band's allegiance to the unit and held a special parade to inspect both bands. Following the parade, the Brass Band was dismissed from the Unit and the Trumpet Band continued as the Unit's only band.



2nd Signals Band (1934)

Instrumentation

Musical arrangements were simple because the only notes that one can play on a trumpet with no valves are Low C, G, C, E, G, and again C (High). Arrangements of the day would have included tunes such as “The Legion Drummer” and “Here They Come”. To get a sense of the type of sound and limitation of the musicality, many people would still be familiar with the American tune “You’re in the Army Now”. The march “There’s Something About A Soldier” was the most popular tune and was the keynote of the 1930’s era band.

During the 1930’s, aside from typical military duties, the Band was famous for its outside performances, most notably at the Waterloo Band Festival Contest, annually attended by upwards of 55 Bands and over 25,000 spectators. The band won first place in its category at least five years in a row and the Parade March Past Trophy for at least four years in a row. Following a performance at Waterloo on July 18th, 1936, the band received a congratulatory letter from Dr. Frank Simon, the President of the American Bandmasters’ Association that stated in part, “Few men in the United States have travelled as extensively as I have judging at all types of musical events, and I can sincerely and without equivocation say that your Corps far excels anything I have seen in its field.”



Sergeant Major Roy Manning and Drum Major Harvey Longstreet accept a First Place Trophy (1935)



2nd Signals (Coronation of King George VI, 1937)

The Band’s notable historical participation of this era included the City of Toronto’s centennial celebrations in 1934 and the coronation celebration ceremony for King George VI in Ottawa in 1937.

The War Years

The second-world war had broken out. According, in part, to a newspaper article, “The Band was participating in the Labour Day parade. Band members knew they were making their last march as a non-permanent unit. Approaching Ossington Avenue on Queen, a khaki-clad dispatch rider from the unit sped up. The Band stopped and orders were handed to Drum-Major Harvey Longstreet. The orders read: ‘On completing the march, return immediately to the Armoury.’” After the Labour Day parade, the band held a final parade at Spadina Armoury.

Following the last inspection, Lt. Col. Kyle made the following speech: “As a band, you are no more. There is no 2nd Divisional Sigs. As a military band, you won outstanding honours and my only regret, although we have tried hard enough, is that we cannot keep you together as a band. From now on, we are embodied in the Canadian Field Force and the serious business of forming a fighting machine. We need truck drivers, dispatch riders, and a score

FEATURE ARTICLE: Toronto Signals Band (continued)

of other classifications for the personnel of the new force, and the way is open to you men to get the first chance. I only hope you can see your way to stay and enable us to form the nucleus of a band in the new force.”

The news article went on to report: “A toast to the Colonel was immediately drunk and Drum Major Harvey Longstreet and Staff Sergeant Kay Mathers immediately offered their services to the new force. Twenty-seven of the band members announced they would stand with their officers and offer their services.” Members of the band reportedly served overseas as batmen, drivers, linemen and other classifications but, most importantly, they wanted “to remain together and supply band music for the Corps.”

According to historical accounts, the 2nd Divisional Signals, led by the Band, paraded down Bay Street to Union Station where they disembarked on the first troop train out of Toronto to Barriefield Camp, in Kingston.

The band travelled overseas in a convoy lead by the British battleship HMS Revenge. According to Signalman W. Bowes, the band formed on the aft deck of their transport ship twice a day to



HMS Revenge (1930)

rehearse. The second day out to sea, a Canadian destroyer was signaled to lead the convoy while the Revenge swung off into a circle to close in behind the transport carrying the band. The Revenge held its position while the band lined the aft deck and played its entire repertoire. The Revenge commander then sent a message that reportedly read, “Thanks, finest trumpet band music I’ve ever heard,” after which the battleship swung back out to lead the convoy. For the remainder of the crossing, Revenge could always be found back in position behind the transport when the band was out to rehearse. As a final gesture, the Revenge



The Band at Barriefield Camp (Kingston) on July 27, 1940 awaiting deployment overseas

commander requested the band trumpeters to play Last Post and Reveille for one of his crew who had passed away during the crossing at his burial at sea.



Only known photo of Signals Band overseas (Alton, England)

In January of 1942, members of the pre-war band that did not go overseas with the cooperation of Major O. N. Dean met to reform the 2nd Divisional Signals Band. The reforming of the band took a twist. The band needed instruments, as the original inventory was overseas. In lieu of the open trumpets, the band fund raised and purchased piston valve trumpets, allowing them to play more harmonious musical arrangements. Baritones were also incorporated. In addition, bell lyres were introduced. These added a distinctive sound and could be used for solo parts and arrangements. It

has been suggested that the Signals Band was the first trumpet band in Canada to introduce this style of instrumentation.

Post WW II

It's 1945, and the Second World War is finally over. Historic reports, from between 1939 and 1945, show that 58 members of the band served with the Canadian Armed Forces all over the world. Two band members served with the United States Forces in the Pacific theatre. Several veterans of the war that were members of the pre-war band returned and strengthened the ranks of the reformed band.

In June 1946, the Band won three first place awards at the Waterloo Music Festival. In September 1947, Toronto Mayor Robert Saunders honoured the band with a civic reception, recognizing seven First Place awards that year at contests in Waterloo, Guelph, Fort Erie and Niagara Falls, New York.

In 1948, the band led a parade from Union Station to City Hall Square (Old) where Toronto Mayor Hiram McCallum read a proclamation announcing the first national observance of "Signals Day".

The Signals Band had become truly famous, both across Canada and in the United States. In a news



2nd Signals Band (Ottawa, Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, 1953)



Returning members included Canadian Army Sergeant Sam Falks and Sergeant Al Stinson, Royal Canadian Air Force Flight Officer Alf Smith and Bruce Adams of the Royal Canadian Navy.

item from Ottawa dated April 26, 1949, Major Al L. Streeter, Inspector of Canadian Militia Bands, described them as the finest Trumpet Band in the Canadian Reserve Army. Circa 1949/50, the RCAF flew the band from the de Havilland Airport in Toronto (now, Downsview Park) to the Camp Borden air station to participate in the Air Force Day celebrations. The RCAF also flew the Band to the Chicago Tribune Music Festival where it performed for an estimated audience of 95,000. During this period, Toronto Mayor McCallum was invited to open the Calgary Stampede. With a contingent of about 500 Torontonians including numerous well-known individuals, the Signals Band led the contingent in a parade down to Union Station to board the city's "Goodwill Train" bound for Calgary. Apparently, this mode of travel was

now beneath the band as a few days later the RCAF flew them to Calgary where they met the train for a welcoming reception.

In 1949, there was a refitting of the Bands Scarlet Uniforms. Of particular note was the introduction of the now recognizable flat top bearskin busbies with a hackle and plumb in the tradition of the Royal Corps of Signals. During this era, the band was often simply announced as "2nd Sigs" or affectionately simply as "Sigs".

Canada's Marching Ambassadors

During the early 1950's, the band travelled extensively for events throughout Ontario and the north-eastern United States. Extremely popular appearances in the United States included the Jersey City Dream Contest (New Jersey), the Syracuse Cavalcade of Champions (New York), the Hilton Pageant of the Drums (New York), as well as in Batavia, New York; Milton, Pennsylvania; York, Pennsylvania; and the Michigan State Fair. Following the first visit to the Jersey City Dream Contest in 1952 the local Associated Press



L-R: Bert Nours, Audi Searle, Fred Searle and Bill Bass pose with an airline stewardess at LaGuardia Airport in New York City after their performance at the 1953 Dream Contest

reported in part "Call them ambassadors, diplomats, or bearers of Goodwill, the Canadians stole the show - and the hearts of the people - at Jersey City last night". After the band's appearance at the Hilton Pageant of Drums, it was tagged by the Hilton Record as "Canada's Marching Ambassadors". The Record further reported, "Their spectacular

FEATURE ARTICLE: Toronto Signals Band (continued)

performance was unexcelled in the history of Hilton bugle corps programs. Canada may well be proud of her boys in scarlet and black”.

1953 marked the year of the Coronation of HRM Queen Elizabeth II. The Toronto Signals Band performed a prominent role at the Ceremonies including playing three concerts and two massed band concerts.

In 1954, the Band won the senior band competition at the annual Canadian National Exhibition Warriors' Day parade. This win was special inasmuch as the first-place trophy was personally presented by HRH Princess Alexandra (cousin of HRM Queen Elizabeth II) and her mother, the Duchess of Kent. Incidentally, the Signals Band and, subsequently, the Colour Guard are the most prolific award winners at the Toronto CNE Warriors Day Parade. The band has won the Elwood Hughes Trophy for Best Brass, Trumpet or Bugle Band on 37 occasions since being introduced in 1954 and the Frank Jamieson Memorial Trophy as Parade Champions on 23 occasions since being introduced in 1969. The colour guard has won the John Labatt Limited Trophy for Best Colour Guard on eight occasions and the Frank Jamieson Memorial Trophy as Parade Champions on one occasion since being formed in 2000.

In 1955, the Band participated in the visit of our then Colonel-In-Chief, HRH Princess Mary, during her visit to Vimy Barracks in



The Band sits for a photo after rehearsal outside the Parliament Buildings in preparation for the Coronation celebrations for HRM Queen Elizabeth II in 1953

Kingston. Also in 1955, the City of Toronto honoured the Band with a civic reception parade and ceremony to celebrate the band's 30th anniversary.

The Band won the 1957 Canadian Championship for the 16th time in 25 years; however, it was the start of some unrest between the band and the Military. Instead of their heavy scarlet tunics, the

Band had changed their uniform for the Canadian Trumpet and Bugle Band Championships. The dress of the day included the traditional trousers with the red strip and busby with hackle and plumb; however, they added a red cummerbund and sash with a white blouse, replacing the scarlet tunic.

Later, the Band replaced the traditional black sock of the busby with a white one and changed the red horsehair plumb to a white feather plumb. Eventually, the Band abandoned the busby and pearl "shako" caps with white feather plumbs; however, the Band only used this uniform for non-military functions. With much controversy, the band competed formally under the name of "Canada's Marching Ambassadors" sometimes referred to simply as "The Ambassadors". In 1958, the band

broke away from the Signals Corps to march as an independent unit. Apparently, this was in reaction to the Corps' insistence that the band return to full military uniform, play only approved regimental marches, and stay out of competition.



Civic reception at Toronto City Hall

Obviously, the band continued; however, it had assumed a dual identity. Some members played only with the Signals Band, some with Canada's Marching Ambassadors, and some with both.

Toronto Signals Trumpet Band

During the 60s and 70s, the band continued to perform at many parades, shows, and other events. In 1965, the band was the duty band for the grand opening of the new Toronto City Hall.

In 1965, the 2nd and 8th Signal Regiments amalgamated, creating "The Toronto Signal Regiment". The regiment moved to its present location at Fort York Armoury on Fleet Street in Toronto in 1966. With the unification of the Canadian Armed Forces in 1970, it became part of the Canadian Forces Communication Command. The Toronto Signal Regiment became the 709 (Toronto) Communications Regiment. During this period, the Band became simply known as the "Toronto Signals Trumpet Band". More significantly, the Band was "struck off strength" and was no longer an official part of the Regiment. Nevertheless, members of the band continued, on a volunteer basis, to represent the interest of the Regiment and the Canadian Forces as duty band. Military functions that the Band supported

(and continues to support to this day) included Commanding Officer Parades, Change of Command Parades, Change of RSM Parades, Church Parades, Remembrance Day Parades, and many, many special functions.

Two popular stories from the tour are associated with prominent individuals with the band of the era and continuing into the 80s: Dick Yorke and Stan Butler. Dick Yorke was always a comedian. At breakfast one morning during the tour, a waitress was taking the tables' order when Dick asked if she had frog's legs. The waitress replied that she believed she did. Dick quickly requested that she "hop down to the kitchen and get me a bowl of cornflakes". Stan Butler was the statesman and always a prankster. He was one of those people who had a gift. He wasn't a particularly good musician, but was part of the lifeblood of the organization. During Tour '67, Stan purchased a watermelon. He named it "Corporal Alphonse" and dutifully carried and cared for it. One day in Sudbury, Stan insisted that Corporal Alphonse muster for Pay Parade; however, the paymaster denied his request explaining that Alphonse was a "green recruit". Later during the tour, Stan could not find Alphonse. When he arrived at the bus, he found several band members eating a slice of watermelon. He quickly accused them all of murder. Stan kept



Canada's Marching Ambassadors (Nationals, Waterloo, 1961)

FEATURE ARTICLE: Toronto Signals Band (continued)

his pranks going until his passing. After missing several practices after weeks of cancer treatments, Stan arrived at the Armouries with his mellophone in one hand and a suitcase in the other and sat down with practice already underway. In obvious distress, patches of lost hair, etc., he jumped up and expressed, “Okay, anyone who’s wondering, I didn’t know what was going to fall off next, so I brought extra parts,” at which time he opened the suitcase to reveal manikin parts.



In the late 60s and into the 70s, many Drum Corps folded and with them, Canada’s Marching Ambassadors. Lack of funding and growing expenses are two of the reasons for the decline of Drum Corps in Canada. The Toronto Signals Band, however, continued to thrive thanks, in part, to the Regiments’ willingness to provide practice space in exchange for the bands’ continued participation at Regimental functions. Formal competitions went by the wayside, except for more casual “Best Band” trophies at parades and other events.

In 1976, the band received a Citation by the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in recognition of its 50th anniversary. The Citation, accepted by the Band President, Stan Butler, stated, in part, “A bond of affection and friendship has developed and encircles the townspeople and the Signals Band, which has resulted in a better atmosphere of understanding between two great nations, the United States of America and Canada.” This citation was also in confirmation of a bond between the band and its almost annual appearance at the Town of Sharpville during Veteran’s Day celebrations. The band was traditionally greeted on the outskirts of the Town and escorted by local police to a reception. Also in 1976, Toronto Mayor David Crombie held a Civic reception parade and ceremony for the band on October 5th in honour of its 50th anniversary. During the ceremony, Mayor Crombie declared October 4th to 9th as “Signals Week” in the city of Toronto. Later, on October 22nd in 1978, the band, as part of the 709 Toronto Communications Regiment, received the “Freedom of the City of Toronto”. Sandwiching the Freedom of the City, the band participated at two more Royal visits including a Tattoo celebrating the Silver Jubilee with HRM Queen Elizabeth II



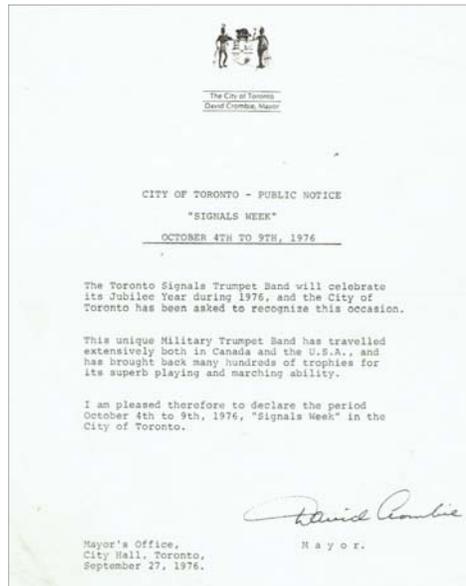
Toronto Signals Band at For York Armouries

in attendance, and the Queen Mother Elizabeth's presentation of the Queen's Colours to the Canadian Forces Maritime Command in Halifax in June 1979.

The Toronto Signals Band

Through the 60s, 70s, and into the 80s, the instrumentation expanded to first include a valve / rotor combination, French horns, mellophones, euphoniums, and contrabasses. As instrumentation required replacement, the band gradually replaced the valve / rotor horns with two-valved horns. In the mid 80s, the band recognized that it was now almost completely chromatic (i.e., could play most musical notes including sharps and flats) thus the true meaning of a "Trumpet Band" was not valid and the moniker "Trumpet" was dropped from its name. Presently, the band carries horns with three valves that are fully chromatic (i.e., can play all musical notes) but are still in the musical key of G.

Through the 80s and 90s, the Band remained extremely popular and was frequently asked to participate in tattoos, community events and parades. These performances were very important as appearance fees and honorariums provided the funds necessary to maintain uniforms and equipment. The Band typically upstaged other performing groups as it continued its Drum Corps style show matching its music with a choreographic drill sequence. Through this era, the Band



1976 "Freedom of the City of Toronto" proclamation from Mayor David Crombie

performed almost annually at the Niagara Regional Police Pipes and Drums Tattoo and made regular appearances at the Fergus Highland Games and the Fort Henry Tattoo in Kingston. In 1986, the Band received the Communication Command Commander's Commendation "In recognition of steadfast support to 709 (Toronto) Communication Regiment."

In 1988, the Band participated at the opening of the Royal Ontario Winter Fair at Exhibition Place in Toronto. HRH Princess Anne attended the opening, reportedly her first official visit with

representatives of the Signals Corps in attendance since her appointment as Colonel in Chief.

The Band came close to folding in 1993. The band needed to replace aging instruments and uniforms so, in cooperation with the Legion's Ontario Command, they organized their own tattoo touted "A Salute to the Royal Canadian Legion." The Legion promised a huge turnout for afternoon and evening shows to be held at Varsity Arena on May 27th; however, that did not happen. Unfortunately, there was a hockey playoff game that night and



The Band performs its musical drill program at the Niagara Regional Police Tattoo.

attendance was very low. It left the Band almost bankrupt. Thanks to the help and generosity of others, the Band survived.

Starting in the 90s, many of the long-term members began retiring and the Band, once again, struggled with low membership. Many of the “old guard” would have preferred to preserve its past glory and disband the organization; however, a small but strong group of dedicated younger members was determined to keep the band alive. The Band needed to rebuild while preserving its reputation. This involved a temporary withdrawal from public performances. The Band did, however, continue to perform its regimental duties during this time.

Moving to the Twenty-first Century

The first significant step to rebuild the Band was opening up membership to female participants (it had been all male). For the first time, the Band welcomed persons 16 years old up to the age of majority, subject to the sponsorship of an existing member who was a parent or someone willing to act as a responsible guardian. The resurgence of the Band was almost immediate. Not only was there an infusion of female members, with several couples uniting in the band as a family activity. The first female members of the Band were June Beaumont and Laura Moffatt (both mellophone players) who participated in the 1999 Oktoberfest parade in Kitchener-Waterloo. In a period of just over one year, the Band’s membership swelled by an addition of over 20 members. Many of these new members came from a complimentary

organization known as the DCAT Chorus (Drum Corps Alumni Toronto) including several that had been past members of the Band and/or Canada’s Marching Ambassadors.

The Band traditionally marched with two or more “Lancers” carrying RCCS pennants and were affectionately nicknamed the “pig stabbers”



by the Bandsmen. The band had never included a formal Colour Guard in its membership; however, several of the new members did not have musical experience. In 2000, the Band created a Colour Guard. With the expanded membership, busbies were in short supply and scarlet tunics were ill-fitting. The solution was to dress guard in the traditional red-striped trousers with black blouses



HRH Princess Anne presides over the 100th anniversary celebrations during the music and drill show presentation of the Toronto Signals Band (2003)



The Toronto Signals Colour Guard present their recently finalized uniforms at the Freedom of the City Parade in Kingston during HRH Anne's visit on the occasion of the 100th anniversary celebrations (2003)

and black shako caps with a white feather plumb. Through several modifications and tweaking, the guard is presently in scarlet tunics with white belts and lanyards (the musicians wear black belts and lanyards) while wearing white pith helmets.

The early 2000s saw a resurgence in Drum Corps activity in southern Ontario, specifically through the formation of various Alumni Corps. This resulted in the Toronto Signals Band's participation in Alumni Drum Corps shows in New York and Pennsylvania. Many Alumni Corps organized shows in southern Ontario and the Band performed at many of these, including performances in Hamilton, Oshawa, Simcoe, Kitchener, and Toronto. Unfortunately, while this era carried on for about ten years, it is now fading as people become older and have difficulty marching. Some of these organizations are surviving, but not all as marching units.

The year 2003 marked the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. In celebration, a weekend of events was scheduled to occur in Kingston, Ontario with HRH Princess Anne, Colonel-in-Chief of the Communications and



*Toronto Signals (Alumni Show, Oshawa, 2012)
Gord Moffat, soloist,*

FEATURE ARTICLE: Toronto Signals Band (continued)

Electronics Branch of the Canadian Armed Forces in attendance. Controversy arose because the Toronto Signals Band had not been invited to attend the celebrations. The duty band for the celebrations was to be the Royal Signals Band from the United Kingdom. The 709 Toronto Communications Regiment was outraged at this lack of recognition of the Band's history and continuing volunteer efforts. Both Honorary Colonels of that time, Sally Horsfall and Jack Lee, petitioned for the Band's involvement with the celebrations. After considerable effort, the Band was invited to attend to perform a demonstration following the official celebration parade. On the Thursday preceding the weekend events, Ted Blight, the Band President of the time, attended a plenary session to discuss transportation and logistics. During this session, the officers of the Royal Signals Band mentioned their concern about

being able to attend multiple events in a brief time span. The Toronto Signals Band President addressed this by responding, "we'll do it". As a result, the Band performed fanfare duties at the Royal Gala Dinner, led as the duty Band at the Freedom of the City Parade in Kingston, and performed as Duty Band at HRH Anne's departure parade from Kingston to her visit to Ottawa.

In 2013, a celebration was held in Kingston marking Signals 110th anniversary in Canada. The event was a celebration parade followed by an afternoon reception. The most memorable experience during this celebration was that HRH Princess Anne, following the parade, took the time to speak with every individual willing to seek her audience. She was more than Royal that day as she genuinely spoke from the heart and was very personable to everyone that approached her.



HRH Princess Anne addresses Drum Major Wilf Roblin and Assistant Music Director Charlie Wakelin following her arrival Fanfare to the Royal Gala Dinner (2013)



Members of the band with Bonnie Crombie, the Mayor of Mississauga (Port Credit, 2016)

Starting around 2015, membership in the Toronto Signals Band, and alumni corps, started dropping. While still performing regimental duties and providing professional performances at parades and other community events, the rate of attrition exceeded new membership. Regardless, the Toronto Signals Band strives to continue and maintain its tradition into the future.

On October 5th, 2016, the Band, once again, received a Canadian Army Communications and Electronic Branch Commendation in celebration of the band's 90th Anniversary.

After about 45 years as the Band's Music Director, Barry Bell has recently resigned. This is an enormous loss for the Band; however, Jon Roblin, the new Music Director, is doing an excellent job!

The Band continues to strengthen as it approaches its 100th anniversary. A recruiting drive is helping, attract new members.



Barry Bell conducting the Band (Waterloo, 2007)



Many thanks to Doug Johns for helping out with the Feature Article – Toronto Signal Band.

Doug has been a member of "Sigs" for 55 years and has extensive knowledge of the Band's history.

He supplied us with the history together with all of the historical photos, as well as many of the newer ones.

Recent photos of the Toronto Signals Band

(taken during the last 10 years)



Toronto Signals Band



L-R: Barbara Roberts (Toronto Optimists Alumni), Connie Casciato, Rosemary Self, Ellie Cameron (DCA, Rochester, 2008)



RIGHT: Barbara Roberts, Optimists Alumni, with Sigs members Connie Casciato, Rosemary Self and Ellie Cameron who helped the Optimists Alumni at the 2008 DCA Alumni Spectacular in Rochester, NY

FEATURE ARTICLE: Toronto Signals Band (continued)



Bill Kellas and his son, Drew, in a Santa Claus parade (Guelph, 2017)



John O'Leary and Kate Gerhardt (Guelph, 2013)



Barry Bell conducts Toronto Signals Band during a drill show (Waterloo, 2007)

Join the “Sigs”

*Experience The Thrill, The Drill
and The Sound of Brass.*



Weekly rehearsal time and location

Every Tuesday night

7:30 – 10:30 pm.

Fort York Armoury

660 Fleet Street West

Second floor, Room 301

Toronto, Ontario M5V 1A9

Contact Information

Website: www.torontosignals.org

Email: info@TorontoSignals.org

Note: The website for Toronto Signals is currently under construction. Until it is ready, please contact Doug Johns at (647) 233-6237



Toronto Signals Band (Woodstock, 2013)



Santa Claus Parade (Guelph, 2013)



Toronto Signals (Sudbury, 2011)

Chapter 19: 1969

Before carrying on, it is time to report some events that took place at the close of the previous year.

Lorne leaves the corps

To the disappointment of all, Lorne Ferrazzutti left the Optimists. He was one of two people, still with the Corps, who had been with it from the beginning; from before, if you count the Danforth Crusaders. The other one was Barry Bell. During all these years, Lorne had worked for the Loblaws Supermarket chain. Last year, he had been promoted, not for the first time, within this organization. The difference this time was that his hours in his new job would conflict with those required by the Corps.

Since the early days, the Corps had drastically increased its rehearsal hours to maintain, or even improve, its standing. The Corps, though, had never been a livelihood, and something had to give. Any sensible person would have made the correct choice, which was to drop the Corps in favour of the job. Lorne was, above all, sensible. It did not mean that he would be entirely out of Corps, or a related activity, but just not with the Optimists.

Fortunately for the Corps, there was someone willing to take over. Ron Kaiser, a pupil of Lorne, was now experienced at writing and instructing for a drum line. For the purpose of this tale, however, Lorne cannot be dismissed quite so briefly.



Ron Kaiser and Lorne Ferrazzutti

Lorne began instructing with the Danforth Crusaders and had been the drum instructor of the Optimists since the original merger. He had also played with and instructed both the Jesters and Commanders. During the long



Danforth Crusaders (1957)

winning streak enjoyed by the Optimists, his drum lines had often been a deciding factor. The rest of the Corps always pulled its weight, but if things were even, the drum scores would tip the balance. This had happened at the last Nationals. Along the way, there had been assistance from talented, ambitious individuals, plus many extra hours put in, voluntarily, by his drum lines. Everything, though, was under the guidance and control of Lorne. More than this, he was a friend to many. If you wanted to learn to read music, most could not, he would take the time to teach you. Never loud or outgoing, his name was well known all over, partly by the success of his drum lines. I could go on a lot longer, but I believe the appropriate picture has been drawn. His shoes would be filled, but not easily. As with other instructors in the past, his loss was a major blow.

Barry Bell had taken a leave of absence last year, but would return this year. He had been reportedly ready to leave in 1961-62 but Corps members had a special meeting in a restaurant to see what could be done to prevent this. It was a measure of the esteem in which he was held.

This was to be a year when many problems would arise, some of a novel nature. To handle these, there was an experienced executive at hand. These men were all experienced with Drum Corps.

- DirectorDon Daber (his seventh year)
- Assistant Director Al Tierney
- Assistant DirectorClare Reid
- Business ManagerCliff Billington
- Secretary TreasurerDick Brown
- Director Cadet CorpsGreg Tierney

The Business Manager announced that twenty contests had been lined up for this year, so the schedule looked good. Every second Wednesday, a bingo was being run by the executive for fund raising. Things looked okay, despite the loss of certain people. It was not until February that the first sign of problems appeared.



Toronto Optimists (Batavia, 1969)

Poor Turnouts

An open letter to the horn line appeared in an “Inside” issue of G.C.C., requesting people come out to practice. Although things usually did slow down in the winter months, this had never before been necessary. Due to poor attendance, there was a corresponding lack of progress in many sections. A final reminder was that the Corps was expected to win the Nationals for the twelfth time.

This and all the new rules laid down since 1964 may have been part of the reason for this attitude. People can only take so much.

The propaganda machine was working full blast now, with most of its output directed at the all-important number 12. It was additional pressure to maintain an incredible record and was to be the focal point of the Optimists existence this year.

One step taken to promote the improvement of the Corps was the setting up of a “Junior Advisory Board”. More bureaucracy. Its first session was held in March 1969. All in attendance were members of the executive, or Corps members who were acting as board members. Don Daber, of course, was chairman. The stated purpose was to make a better Corps and, of course, title #12.

Part of these objectives was to establish a closer working relationship between the Corps itself and the executive.

The duties of the board, in addition to holding regular meetings, were to oversee just about everything. This included initiations, sale of rookies, assisting of rookies, spirit on trips, camp, home, trip holdovers, bus, Corps dinner, social events, setting an example and publishing the “inside” paper. Phew! Never before had such a

concerted effort been made to ensure a specific outcome. Never before had it been thought necessary. There were, as well, other things, and all this pointed to a degree of sophistication never before attempted with this Corps. Comparing this with the 1958 Corps reveals almost two different units. The original Corps just went out and did what it was designed for. Everything else was handled by one small executive. Most of the things just mentioned did not exist. If the Optimists had not grown in the complex fashion outlined, it is possible that they would not now be chasing title number twelve. It was now a different era that required different techniques to survive and prosper.

The Competition

Uptown, the perennial rivals of the Optimists, De La Salle, were far from idle. They were planning to use an eighteen to twenty piece percussion section, and were getting anywhere from thirty-six to forty-five horns at rehearsal. Last year, they had come so close to winning the National title they could taste it and they would not rest until they had it.

Nothing was known yet of La Salle Cadets, who were never to be discounted. Being as far away as they were, information was harder to come by.

Finances and Fund Raising

Prior to the February 9th issue of G.C.C. “inside” urging better horn line attendance at rehearsals, an edition had stressed fund raising. This year it was to be selling chemical fertilizer, a scheme to help grease the financial wheels. The Cadets had used this method the previous year, raising \$2,000 in two weeks.

Money raised in this fashion was used for items not covered in the Optimist Club budget. Among these were a truck subsidy for gas and upkeep. The Corps now had an equipment truck. They occasionally had use of one in the past but it was owned by a member. Now a truck belonged to the Corps, as did all the expenses involved. Midwest trips always took extra funds. Because the Corps had not fared very well in the Midwest, competition-wise, and prize money was not enough. The crowds, however, loved them.

In GCC, Vol 9, #1, Ron Chong wrote:

Here you are now, a member of the greatest corps in Canada. Perhaps you never have had any previous experience in a corps. And now that you're in one, it's like having a new toy, something with which you can enjoy yourself and use at your leisure. However, to any of us, the only pleasure we derive is from working to a peak of perfection and subsequently winning.

We do not expect you to feel the same as us for time and experience will nurture you and be your sole teacher. But in the meantime, we do expect you to work and perform at your greatest degree of proficiency. Anyone who is just tagging along for the ride and then expects to share in the winning will soon be discovered and treated accordingly. Let us not forget that we are a unit of individuals with varying capabilities and talents. But he whosoever endeavours to attain a higher level of achievement will be recognized and respected for his efforts.

To those of you who are complacent and seek nothing better to further your position in the corps, I can safely say that you have the wrong attitude and are hurting the corps, as well as yourself. If you feel capable of playing a better horn, drum or marching better and are not making every effort to do so, then you fail to grasp the decree of an “OPTIMIST”, which is simply that life and people must, and will, improve and progress. Stop, now and look at yourself and ask, am I doing my best and can I yet do better? Only you know the answer.



Ron Chong (1969)

We'd like to blow our own horn...
With a little help from you...

Each year almost every organization requires additional funds and the Optimist/Cadets Drum Corps are no exception. This year our motto is to help you. We'll like to sell more fertilizer...with a little help from you. Every bag of Green Grow Chemical Fertilizer our members will help help you help the Corps of another boy. Don't you buy your spring supply of GREEN GROW from our young salesman? You'll help him toward getting that new badge, you'll save money for yourself and get delivery right to your door, if you wish. Say it to yourself this summer as the Optimists go marching by!

SALESMAN: _____ PHONE: _____

Green Grow
Chemical Fertilizer

YES, I would like to help this drum corps and save money on this year's purchase of my fertilizer.

Please receive:
 one
 two
 three
40 lb. bags @ \$2.00 per bag.
Payment on delivery.

PLEASE PRINT:
NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

GREEN GROW can be used for lawns, turf, flowers, and vegetable gardens. It is a specialty fertilizer. Apply at a rate of approximately 2 lbs. per 100 sq. feet of lawn. NET WEIGHT—40 LBS.

Fertilizer Promo

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth. Chapter 19. (continued)

The Nationals now entailed more than a Saturday morning to Saturday evening excursion and a hotel stay was required.

There was also money needed to buy things to sell. In other words, money to make money. These and other things were the reason that extra money was needed and raised. In the future, finance was to bring a great upheaval in the Corps operation.

Corps jackets this year cost a member thirteen dollars, with an eleven-year crest on it for an additional dollar fifty. Anybody who buys such things these days can only gasp at these prices. Such is progress.

Another sign of the times was that the Corps now preferred to hold closed rehearsals. This had never before been a regular habit of this Corps, but with the tightness of things now, it might have been a good idea.

An aid to this trend was the fact that the Optimists were now the only Corps in Toronto to have the use of an armoury. This was a definite advantage. This fact also made full turnouts a necessity for the dates on which they were available.

Saturday, March 15, was set aside as “Fertilizer Blitz Day” and was listed as a compulsory event for all. This was one way to ensure some sales and was similar to the method used to sell peanuts in 1961. That, though, was never compulsory, just voluntary and an indication of how things had changed.

A tradition begun a few years earlier was to be continued on April 13th at the Shrine. This was the now familiar “selling of rookies” ceremony. An old guy would buy new guys, or rookies for one dollar. It was the duty of the old guy to teach the rookie the ropes, while the rookie would become the obedient servant of the old hand. This practice was as much fun as anything else, never reaching the heights or depths sometimes practised in certain military academies or private schools.

A practical side was that a new guy would have a mentor in the Corps who would assist him to adjust to its ways. He would, therefore, become a better “Optimist” quicker than if left alone. After a year, of course, he was no longer a rookie and became an old guy.

Another addition to corps lore was the adoption of a Corps motto. It had taken a long time for this idea to take hold, the closest thing yet being the club motto, “Friend of the Boy”. Now, more fitting, the motto would be “Crede Quod Habes, Et Habes.” Properly motto-like stated in Latin, its English translation was “Believe you have it, and you have it”. It was an apt motto as, during recent years, if the Corps had not believed that they had it, then they would not have.



Winning the Circuit Guard Championship

March 22nd, Ottawa saw the Optimists Guard win, for the second year in a row, the Canadian Championship Guard Contest. They narrowly edged out De La Salle in the process.

For fun and spirit, the Corps held a rally night and party. This was a good thing, considering all the work projects now in hand. This year's Ontario Individuals saw the Optimists fare quite well, amid the largest number of entrants yet recorded. Five first places capped a decent collection of placings in various categories. Highest scores were achieved in rifle and horn categories, reflecting quality in both the guard and horn line.



Don Daber with Optimists Championship Guard (1969)

Other Bits of News

Bernie Beer, the ageless, timeless, ex-Optimist Assistant Corps Director was now Chairman of the Board of the C.D.C.A. for 1969-70. He would guide it into the coming decade.

Recordings of the corps is a subject thus far neglected. For many years the Optimists had been recorded on top quality records. This year they were on them again, in very good company.

- **SuperRecords:** The 4th Annual Shriners International: featuring Kilties, Boston, Optimists, La Salle Cadets
- **North American Invitational:** featuring The Troopers, Vanguard, Optimists, De La Salle
- **Canadian Nationals:** featuring Optimists, La Salle, Chatelaines, Commanders

These were just some of those on which they appeared. The presence of other Canadian Corps on these records shows how Drum Corps had grown and improved in Canada over the years.

Vern Johansson was leading the Corps on all these sessions. He had now been leading the Corps as either first or second Drum Major, longer than anyone else ever had. He was good at the job and had become a well-known figure in local circles.



1969 Shriners' Album Cover

The May 11th issue of Green Capsule Comments “Inside” detailed the events for this year’s “long weekend” camp. This year, it was to be at the Ukrainian Youth Camp in Oakville, Ontario. These camps, for learning and polishing the show, were loads of fun and all sorts of things went on. De La Salle and Scarborough Firefighters Drum Corps were doing the same thing. The Scarborough Corps sponsored by the local fire department were not newcomers, having originated in 1961. Although nobody could remotely foresee it now, they would one day play a very big part in the future of the Optimists.

Also in this issue of G.C.C. was a Corps quiz about the Optimists. Some of the answers are interesting and revealing.

- Gord Robinson of the Shrine Connection was now an honorary member of the Toronto Optimists.
- Since the original, 1952, beginning, there have been four changes of uniform: Boy Scout Uniform, Optimist Blue, Dark Green Blouse, Black Trousers; Present Blouse, Black Trousers.
- The Optimists introduced rudimental bass drum in 1964. Into Canada, that is. Blessed Sacrament had been using them since 1962.
- Eleven buttons had been issued one for each National Championship.
- Booster material sold over the years included; buttons, crests, records, lighters, money (fake), pennants, pens, calendars, photos, decal, posters. You did not have to be a salesman in this Corps, but it helped.
- The best years in the Corps history were said to be 1962 and 1968. Only one contest was lost in 1962, and 1968 saw the Corps lose five in a row, only to pull up to win the Nationals. A footnote to this is that the 1962 Corps is still talked about today, and not only by ex-Optimists.
- Of the people in and instructing the Corps in those days, only three were now left. These were Barry Bell, Joe Gianna, and Ron Kaiser. All were now instructors.

Other instructors for this year were:

- Jack Roberts: Drill Director and Writer, with Ron Cooper and Bob Davidson
- John MacDonald: Percussion, with Ron Kaiser



John MacDonald working with the drums (1969)

Most of these people were home grown types who had graduated from the playing ranks of the Corps itself. So far, except for the brief use of Vince Bruni on drill, it had always been this way.

The competition season was fast closing in. Everybody knew it was not going to be easy, and one of the first tests was to prove just that.

The Competition Season

June 8th saw Canadian Junior Corps square off in Batavia, N.Y., an early contest that would help set the pace for the season.

The results:

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-------|
| 1st | De La Salle | 75.70 |
| 2nd | Appleknockers Junior..... | 71.90 |
| 3rd | The Optimists | 70.85 |
| 4th | Les Metropolitains..... | 67.20 |

Competition in the United States was on neutral territory, giving good indication of where one stood. As it stood, now, De La Salle had surged ahead of where they had left off last year, leaving the others choking in their dust. Messrs. McKolskey, Clark and company had done a good job. It was going to be a tough year. Both Corps were well matched in size, with field numbers in the eighties. Equality also extended to colour and performance. Visual performance, that is. The judges' pads had told a different story.

Les Metropolitains were quite a way back but would close up later, as was now becoming a trademark of Quebec Corps.



Drum Majors on Retreat (Batavia, 1969)



Toronto Optimists on the line (Batavia, 1969)

Prior to this show, at the same location, there had been a standstill contest between the Optimist Cadets and the feeder Corps of St. Josephs. The Optimist unit was seen to be more advanced and could have competed at Junior “B” level if they had a drill.

Les Metropolitains sprung a surprise when they edged De La Salle in Rochester, N.Y. Del, on a roll this year, were to be called the new power in Canada. For Mets to beat them was quite an accomplishment.



Optimist Cadets (Batavia, 1969)

Del was using over thirty people in their colour guard this year and reversed a long-standing trend. The Optimists might follow suit. This fact was an indication of how things were changing in regards to size. The fact that the Optimists were following, rather than leading, was a sign of how other things were changing as well.

Drum line changes were now evident, getting into varied instrumentation. Tympanis and double bass, four at a time, by Del and the Optimists, respectively, were in use. It was not that many years before when only three snare, three tenor, two bass, and one cymbal were used, if you could find them. Such an arrangement would never be seen again among the more competitive Corps.

There was, around this time, a reunion of Optimist Alumnae. Dennis DeCarli, one of the original members of the Corps, was in charge of this. If the ship appeared to be sinking, at least the rats were not leaving. Most Optimist Alumnae were pretty loyal and were often seen at shows and contests.



De La Salle's drums (Batavia, 1969)

It is worth noting that at any Optimist reunion, big or small, the reigning topic of conversation is always the Corps. No matter that some of them are now presidents, vice-presidents, have their own businesses, or have not much at all. After five to ten minutes the Corps, once again, is the main interest for the next couple of hours, or until the beer runs out.

This was to be a pivotal year in Canadian Drum Corps, even historic. Sadly, the telling will suffer due to information being somewhat sparse. That is unfortunate. This situation will occur again, regarding future years. Then, as now, we shall do the best with what we have. Here goes!

The Shrine Show

Before a crowd of 17,000 excited fans, this year’s Shriners International took place. All but one of the Canadian entries did well, placing closer to their American counterparts than usual. The Optimists were among them and, although third in the top three Canadian entries, they had improved a great deal from Batavia.



Toronto Optimists (Shrine Contest, CNE, 1969)

The four top placings, held by the Americans, ranged in score from Kilties with 80.95, in first, Boston 79.05, second, Blessed Sacrament 78.80, third, and St. Josephs 75.56. Fifth was De La Salle, with 74.30, leading the rest. Next, came La Salle

Cadets, with 73.66, followed by the Optimists at 73.65, barely in seventh. These three Canadian units were all less than one point of each other. Les Metropolitains were so far back as to be out of contention, yet not so long ago they were nudging De La Salle. A strange business this is.

De La Salle’s horn line was said to be a match for any of the Americans at this show. Also noted was the great improvement of the Optimists. This observation was borne out by the scores of this competition.

Don Daber was still the director. He had taken over when the Corps was the undisputed number one in Canada.

The last couple of years had been shaky, and this one looked as if it might be even shakier. A lesser person might have quit. Not him! If things became less rosy, he would still be there. Don was an unsung hero. Green Capsule Comments was still stressing the “on to #12” theme. Well, it was coming, that was unavoidable, but the outcome, right now, was beyond prediction. Recent scores showed the three main contenders to be candidates for top honours. Significantly, though, no other Canadian Corps had yet beaten De La Salle in Canada. Les Metropolitains had done it in Rochester, but they were now out of contention.



LaSalle Cadets (1969)

Still definitely in the race were De La Salle, La Salle Cadets, and the Optimists. Now a familiar scene, it was anybody’s year. The face of Canadian Junior Drum Corps had changed forever.

Though the Optimists, who could rightly claim the sixties as their decade, might not like it, the change was for the better. No one could now be considered a sure-fire winner in all-Canadian contests. This situation made for very exciting and entertaining shows.



Toronto Optimists (Batavia, 1969)

These statements do not belittle what the Optimists had accomplished in the past. That was a phenomenal achievement, not likely to be repeated. Thus far, it has not been. The big winners from this change were, without doubt, the fans. They got more for their money, with nail-biting results and better shows.

Shows in the United States.

Two major contests in the United States showed how close things were.

De La Salle, at the World Open, 10.70 out of first place.

The Optimists, at the U.S. Open, 9.84 out of first place. A difference of only 0.86

These shows were held on August 15th and 16th, not that far from “Number 12”.



Toronto Optimists (Michigan City, IN, 1969)

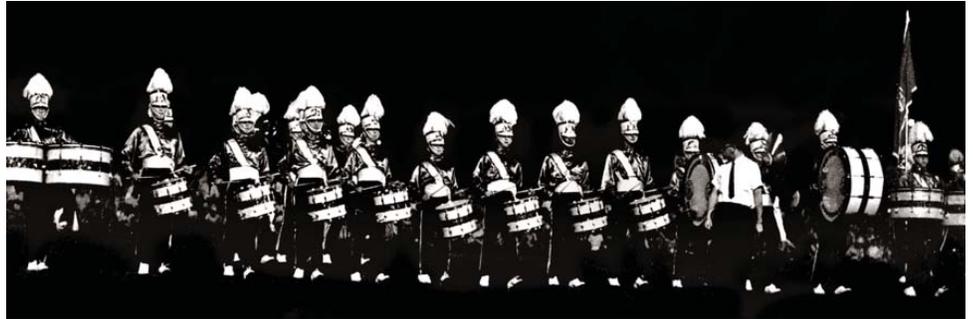
At the World Open, two California Corps began their ascent. This leak would become a flood.

Due to lack of information about this year, it is impossible to do justice to all the events that took place. All that can be said with any accuracy is that towards the end of the season things got even closer. Also, as the Canadian Nationals approached, no Canadian Corps had defeated De La Salle in Canada. Del had even won the CNE Contest for the first time since 1961. All other years it had been an Optimist preserve.

Thankfully, we do have an account of the all-important Canadian Nationals. This promised to be the most hair-raising one yet, mainly because the reigning champions had not yet been able to defeat their greatest rivals. Yet, there was a good chance it could be done. It would call for a supreme effort.

The 1969 Nationals

For the Optimists, the whole year had been geared towards this contest. The #12 campaign was constantly promoted through the pages of Green Capsule Comments “Inside” editions. Along with this, almost every day of the two weeks, up to and including this contest,



Toronto Optimists drums (1969)

was laid out in detail. Rehearsals times, meeting times, arrival times, leaving times, eating times. Nothing was missed. It would have done any army proud. As mentioned before, with sparse information being available, no information regarding the preliminaries is currently available. Diminishing this omission is the fact that prelims are often indecisive, results often being overturned. It is the all-important finals that count.

The Finals, Ottawa, Ontario, 1969

Although La Salle Cadets were definitely in the picture as championship contenders, all eyes were inevitably focussed on the Optimists and De La Salle. There was something here that was above the commonplace. These two fine Corps had been going at each other for close to eleven years now. If there had sometimes been bad blood between the two, and there had, the reverse was also true. If one of them had not been at this affair, it would have seemed somewhat unreal.

Both Corps were extremely nervous, though for different reasons. For the Optimists, it was the same reason that had existed for the last eleven years. Their National title was at stake. De La Salle knew that this was the best chance they had ever had to win this coveted title which had always eluded them, sometimes by only a hair’s breadth. They had beaten the Optimists ten times this year yet, without this one, it would mean little. De La Salle wanted this title more than anything else.



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Ottawa, 1969)

All the proceedings of the evening would be conducted in an atmosphere of electric tension. La Salle Cadets put on an excellent performance, in front of a hometown crowd and it was evident that the outcome would not become known until the retreat.

When the Optimists entered the field, they were met with dead silence until they stepped off the line to “Hang ‘em High”. It was apparent to all that everyone was giving of their utmost and little, if any, boing was heard this year. This Corps was putting its heart and soul into its performance, one that outdid all previous ones this year. This observation was unanimous.

Then, of course, De La Salle took the field. No doubt due to nervous tension, it was noted that they did not put on as good a show as they had on previous occasions. It was, however, a match for anyone else. The outcome, as yet, was undetermined. Until the retreat, that is.



De La Salle (Nationals, Ottawa, 1969)

The Retreat

Above all, this was a judges’ contest. Uninvolved with records, nerves, emotions, tensions, and fears, they do their job as required. In the process, they determine who was the best on a given night. On this night there was no obvious, clear-cut winner. It would all be left to the fine points on the score sheets.

The announcer began his slow, tantalizing climb up the score sheets. When he got to third, there was a visible heightening of tension throughout the entire stadium.

In third place, it was announced, with a score of 78.45, a pause, then, the La Salle Cadets. They had performed well, but their time had not yet come.

Then another, greater, increase in suspense, as Drum Corps history hung in the balance.

In second place, a pause, with a score of 80.80, and in first place with a score of 80.85. It was agonizing.

In second place, with a score of 80.80, from Toronto (both corps were from Toronto)

Then The Optimists!

For a while, that was as far as the announcer got, as immediate bedlam took place. De La Salle displayed what was probably the greatest display of controlled frenzy ever seen on a Drum Corps field. Twelve years of frustration and disappointment exploded, as everything went up in the air, yet without breaking ranks.



Toronto Optimists on retreat (Nationals, Ottawa, 1969)

They had finally done it. They had defeated the Optimists at the Canadian National Championship. It had not come easily. The crowd reaction was generally favourable, though definitely not unanimous. This had been a hard fought affair, as the margin of victory, or defeat, showed. It was only 0.05 but it meant everything!

De La Salle were to be congratulated. If they had not earned it, they would not have won. They had finally overcome the jinx of the “2nd place” feeling, clearing the psychological barriers to the road ahead. Now they could, and would, rise to even greater heights.

What about the Optimists? Were they now just another Drum Corps? Hardly!

The greatest Nationals winning streak ever seen in Drum Corps had finally come to an end. As they stood silently on the field, contemplating their fate, no doubt some members felt a heavy responsibility. They would be known as the ones who lost, broke the record, smeared the streak. In retrospect, none of them should have felt this way. In truth no other drum corps in competitive history has achieved what the Optimists had achieved.

All the changes in style, instruments, planning, and myriad other things had been absorbed, mastered, and successfully presented for almost twelve years. After leading the way in many of these things, they now had absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. In the future, it would still be a feather in the cap of any Canadian Corps to beat the Optimists.

It would also lead to some unpleasantness, as others would take an opportunity, now and then, to deliberately slight or snub this Corps. This being one of the less admirable traits of human nature and Drum Corps are, after all, made up of human beings.

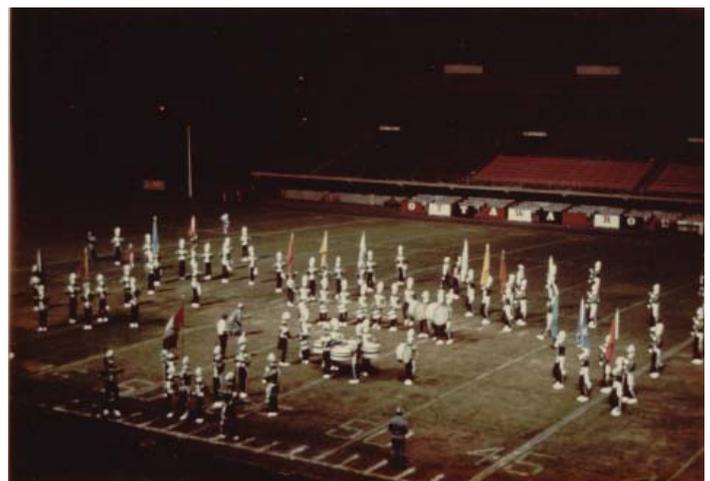
The Aftermath

For the first time in twelve years, the Optimists marched from the Nationals field second from last to cheers as well as boos. Not everyone, it turned out, agreed with the decision. What was seen were people removing Optimists buttons from their jackets and throwing them on the ground. Everyone loves a winner, and the Optimists no longer filled the bill. It's times like this when you find out who your real friends are.

Barry Bell who, earlier this year, had reverted to bugle instructor from music director, looked wistfully at his busload of protégés. For him, too, it was an occasion. His time had come, as one day he must have surely



De La Salle with Nationals trophy (At the school, 1969)



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, Ottawa, 1969)

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth. Chapter 19. (continued)

known it would. At least he had the consolation of knowing the Corps that had beaten his was partly taught by ex-members of his Corps.

When heads and hearts had cooled down, acting like the champions they had once been, a group of Optimists visited their conquerors to offer congratulations. Such a gesture was not uncommon and reflected well on the Corps. De La Salle had acted in a similar fashion in 1961, as had Scout House in 1958.

The subdued bus trip home was punctuated with pity comments – “I’m sorry”, “It won’t happen again”, “I let you down”, “What happened”, etc., etc., etc. The debates would go on for years.

An Explanation

With the advent of new instructors to both of the Corps under examination, certain things happened to both that contributed to this year’s result. No one was to blame. It just happened. Drums had usually been the Optimists strong point. They had from the beginning used a closed style of drumming. It was better for execution.

This year, they switched to a more open style, flashier, but difficult to execute accurately. On the other side, De La Salle had adopted a more closed style, which was better adapted to good execution scores. Oddly enough, it was not this factor that caused the battle to be lost. Where it occurred was in the general effect drum caption.

| <u>SUMMARY SCORE SHEET OF NATIONALS:</u> | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|
| | <u>GE/M&M(1)</u> | <u>GE/M&M(2)</u> | <u>AVER.</u> | <u>GE. Drums (1)</u> | <u>(2)</u> | <u>AVERAGE</u> |
| <i>Cadets LaSalle:</i> | 81. | 77. | 79. | 83. | 82. | 82.5 |
| <i>Optimists:</i> | 94. | 86. | 90. | 85. | 76. | 80.5 |
| <i>Vicomtes:</i> | 56. | 30. | 43. | 38. | 43. | 40.5 |
| <i>Del:</i> | 89. | 69. | 79. | 84. | 84. | 84.0 |

| | <u>G.E. Bugle (1)</u> | <u>(2)</u> | <u>AVER.</u> | <u>TOTAL G.E.</u> | <u>FIELD M&M(1)</u> | <u>(2)</u> | <u>AVERAGE M&M</u> |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| <i>Cadets LaSalle:</i> | 86. | 79. | 82.5 | 24.4 | 21.9 | 20.5 | 21.25 |
| <i>Optimists:</i> | 82. | 82. | 82. | 25.25 | 23.7 | 20.7 | 22.2 |
| <i>Vicomtes:</i> | 42. | 34. | 38. | 12.15 | 18.2 | 18.2 | 18.2 |
| <i>Del:</i> | 89. | 81. | 85. | 24.80 | 24.2 | 22.2 | 23.2 |

| | <u>Field Drums(1)</u> | <u>(2)</u> | <u>AVER.</u> | <u>Field Bugles¹</u> | <u>Field Bugles²</u> | <u>Aver.</u> |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Cadets LaSalle:</i> | 14.5 | 17.3 | 15.9 | 17.8 | 16.6 | 17.2 |
| <i>Optimists:</i> | 14.5 | 16.5 | 15.5 | 18.1 | 17.6 | 17.85 |
| <i>Vicomtes:</i> | 5.6 | 10.2 | 7.9 | 11.0 | 11.2 | 11.1 |
| <i>Del:</i> | 13.9 | 16.1 | 15.0 | 17.9 | 17.8 | 17.85 |

| | <u>Total Score:</u> | <u>Penalty</u> | <u>FINAL SCORE:</u> |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| <i>Cadets LaSalle:</i> | 78.75 | .3 | 78.45 |
| <i>Optimists:</i> | 80.80 | -- | 80.80 |
| <i>Vicomtes:</i> | 49.35 | -- | 49.35 |
| <i>Del:</i> | 80.85 | -- | 80.85 |

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Judges: G.E. M&M(1) --- Flagg.</i> | <i>Field M&M (1) --- Simpson.</i> |
| <i>G.E. M&M(2) --- Laskowski.</i> | <i>Field M&M (2) --- Gebardt.</i> |
| <i>G.E. Drums (1) --- Bennett.</i> | <i>Field Drums (1) --- Flowers</i> |
| <i>G.E. Drums (2) --- Peulloux.</i> | <i>Field Drums (2) --- Reynolds.</i> |
| <i>G.E. Bugle (1) --- Wormington.</i> | <i>Field Bugles (1) --- Zazzara.</i> |
| <i>G.E. Bugle (2) --- Bulloch.</i> | <i>Field Bugles (2) --- Mezina.</i> |

Timing: S. Biggs.
Chief Judge: W. Parker.

Breakdown of scores for the 1969 Nationals in Ottawa

Different composition of lines of both Corps gave rise to one judge, an American, preferring one to the other. The result was a large spread in the general effect drum score. All other things being equal, this was where the contest was lost. De La Salle had won the trophy for best horn line and the Optimists that for best marching and maneuvering.

A quick glance back at the year shows that the Optimists did not defeat De La Salle once this year. So the end result could hardly be called a surprise. What occurred was a near miracle that made things very exciting.



Toronto Optimists Drums (Batavia, 1969)

Downright, cold, light of day analysis of the effect of this year has to show that what happened was probably for the best. For any activity to be dominated by one organization for so long is not healthy for the overall activity. That the Optimists finally lost was good for the Canadian Junior Drum Corps movement. It opened the door for others, as well as De La Salle, to contemplate chances of winning in the future. Others would rise, on their own initiative, not because the Optimists were gone. They were not. It had been shown that they were, after all, not invincible, and the field was now open to all comers. This still included the Optimists, who were now back in the pack where they had not been for a long time. How they were to fare in this unaccustomed position, we shall shortly explore.

Rounding out the year were two events, one with an appropriate name, whose meaning was altered by this year's events.

The Optimist Cadet Dance, billed as a “Celebrate the 12th” dance, was intended as a celebration of the twelfth title. Instead, it became a celebration of September 12th, the date on which it was held.

Secondly, the 8th Annual Corps Dinner was held to present annual awards and present plans for the future. For the first time, it was not a victory dinner. Corpsman of the Year Award was presented here, decided by a vote of the members themselves. Considering the effort that must have been put out by more than one person, in order to come so close, starting from so far back, this could have been a multiple award.

Now the year was over. It was time to lick wounds, relax for a while, and for those who were still of age, still interested, to contemplate next year. There would be no campaign for thirteen, at least comparable to that for twelve. It was possible that some in the Corps were glad of this. The pressure was off and no doubt some were relieved. They could go back to square one and begin again. The shoe was now on the other foot. The Optimists were history. They were legend, too.

Now, the Corps could move on to a different future.



Toronto Optimists (Batavia, 1969)

A few Scores for Optimists and some of our competitors as the summer of **1969** progressed

| Contest ► Corps Name ▼ | Batavia (June 8) | Shriners (June 21) | Michigan City (July 12) | US Open Marion, OH (Aug 16) | Ontario Provs (Aug 23) | CNE Toronto (Sept 1) | Nationals Ottawa (Sept 6) |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Toronto Optimists | 70.850 | 73.650 | 63.950 | 74.350 | 75.150 | 82.550 | 80.800 |
| De La Salle | 75.700 | 74.300 | | | 77.650 | 82.850 | 80.850 |
| LaSalle Cadets | | 73.660 | | | 74.350 | | 78.650 |
| Argonne Rebels | | | 60.100 | 74.750 | | | |
| Blessed Sacrament | | 78.800 | | | | | |
| Chicago Cavaliers | | | 76.500 | | | | |
| Kilties | | 80.950 | 76.900 | 84.200 | | | |
| St Joe's (Batavia) | | 75.650 | | | | | |

**For a list of scores for this or other years, go to our website:
<https://www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca/>**

Chapter 20: 1970, A New Decade, A New Beginning

The morning after the 1969 Canadian Junior Drum and Bugle Corps Championships, the world went on as usual. Outside of Canadian Drum Corps circles, some in the United States, and some media, the rest of the world was unaware that the Optimists were no longer Canadian Champions. This is not to diminish the efforts of all involved, but to help put it in proper perspective.

For the first time since 1958, the Optimists had to contemplate their future without the benefit of championship status. If this would take a while to get used to, it would be done and the Corps would survive. Many Corps had not survived similar happenings.

However, though the Corps was defeated, its spirit was intact. There would just be an absence of all the things that go to champions. That was now the choice of De La Salle.



Toronto Optimists on the field at De La Salle (1958)

One noticeable aspect of this situation was the lack of information abroad concerning the Optimists. The explanation was simple. They were now out of the spotlight. Most eyes were on, and most news about, the new champions. All this became glaringly apparent when researching this story. I could compile only five pages of notes from available information. So, maybe this is a good time to explore, for a while, other aspects of the Corps, and the Drum Corps movement in general.

Drum Corps in the 1960s

The decade of the sixties produced some outstanding units. Also during this decade, Corps rose from obscurity, sometimes of long standing, and others disappeared. A few rose to great heights and then disappeared. This phenomenon occurred in both junior and senior ranks but here we are concerned with the juniors.

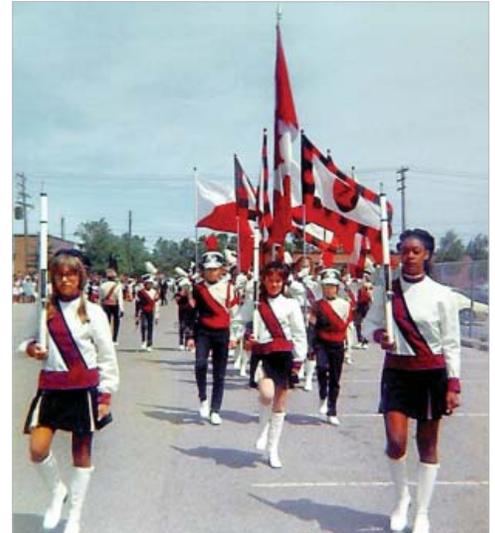
Overall, the rise of the juniors surpassed that of the seniors. Organizational changes in Junior Corps would soon alter the scene much more. The fastest rise in Canada had to be the La Salle



LaSalle Cadets in 1966, the first year they beat Optimists at prelims!

Cadets, who in less than three years had almost won the Nationals. The days when a Corps could do it in one season were long gone. Also gone was the supremacy of a single Corps. This had been helped along by the formation of new Corps, thus cutting down available talent. Some had risen from the ashes of former Corps; other had totally new beginnings.

One of the former had recently become a member of the Western Ontario Junior “B” circuit, now in its second year. They were the Etobicoke Crusaders, formed from the now defunct Michael Power Knights. The western circuit of “B” Corps had anywhere from six to eleven members, which was good for Corps in general. A lot of people were learning the ropes, at their own level. These Corps could survive and flourish if they were not sucked dry by others seeking to fill their ranks. Unfortunately, maybe inevitably, this did happen, often with devastating results for the small Corps.



Etobicoke Crusaders

Other News

Growing in popularity, another guard circuit was formed. The amount of activity in this field had grown to the point that it could support another circuit.

On the Canadian judging scene, Vince Macciocchi now became the Chief Judge of the Canadian Association. He had been a judge for a long time, serving as such under Al Baggs.

At the C.D.C.A. convention in Montreal, it was decided that this year’s Nationals would be held in Toronto, on September 12th. It might turn out to be an interesting contest, as the Optimists were intent on regaining the title. Towards this end, they were having closed rehearsals, keeping things under wraps.

This year’s O.D.C.A. Individuals took place at Cedarbrae Collegiate, in Scarborough. It again saw a record number of entries, over one hundred and twenty-five entrants. As a result, the evening finals took over four and a half hours to complete,



Optimist Cadets (1970)

longer than many full Corps competitions. The Optimists did well in solo boys’ rifle, baritone and rifle duet. They had excelled in these captions before.

The Scarborough Firefighters were changing from Junior “B” to Junior “A” this year. Starting in 1961, they had gradually worked their way up. To cement this new ranking, they became the newest members of the “A Junior C” circuit.

Closer to home, the Optimists announced the scrapping of their triple drums in favour of tympanis¹. The Nationals general effect score may have had something to do with this. Also, it was a conforming to trends that had begun during the sixties.



Scarborough Firefighters (1968)

Other changes that had occurred, in a general fashion, were the introduction of a rotary valve on horns, contra-bass bugles and mellophones. Corps horn lines had grown from a standard twenty-seven to around forty-five.

Drum lines had grown from a standard nine to as high as twenty-four. This figure was to increase again in the future, as were horn lines, until Corps reached the size of today.

If the Optimists were hoping to regain their title this year, fate had decreed that it would not be easy. Out of seventy-five members in the Corps, thirty were new recruits. A turnover this size makes it hard to hang on to anything let alone regain a title. At least they were willing to make the attempt, showing that there was still spirit.

In order to maintain and bolster this spirit, another tradition was created. This was T.A.S. night. “Tradition, Allegiance and Spirit” was a creation of Don Daber. Something like this was needed, and it would eventually prove its worth.

The purpose was to foster spirit and, if there were sparks, turn them into flames. A night was set aside for this, and it was a good way to make a guy feel at home. After one of these sessions everyone, new and old would know each other better. All would truly feel themselves to be Optimists. It also served to renew feelings of any members who may have been flagging in enthusiasm. If there were any, it would not have been many.



Singing the corps song (Woodstock, 1970)

¹ *The plan might have been to purchase tympanis; however, the photos from 1970 continue to show the triple bass drums and none of the shots include tympanis. My guess is that funding was an issue.*

The serious side of all this was to promote and foster the spirit needed for regaining the Canadian Championship, making the Optimists number one in Canada again. It was a worthy goal, but one that no other Corps felt the need to attain quite so much. Vince Lombardi would have felt right at home here.

Behind all this, the years of pressure, the work, the victories, lay another Corps that we have barely glimpsed... the fun Corps.

Pictures from those years show happy smiling faces, not grim, serious ones. People happy with what they were into. When girls entered the picture, this was even more evident. Their presence had a good effect. This momentous change was not far off, beginning in the colour guard and spreading throughout.



Vern Johansson, Optimists' Drum Major, Gets Married (April 11, 1970)

The picture of grim dedication painted so far, year after year, in pursuit of victory after victory, was partially true; but it was also a lot of fun, for all. Most intensity and grimness was reserved for the field. Win or lose, the high spirits could not be contained for long. Had it been any other way, it would have ended long ago.

For some, leaving the Corps could be a major blow. Aging out, as it is often called, sooner or later affected everyone. If the Corps was one's foremost preoccupation. Leaving the corps could leave a big gap in one's life. Those who had other interests did not find it so disastrous. Most people adjusted well and fitted into their place in society, which would have been their norm, Corps or no Corps.

This year was to produce some upsets that were totally unexpected. The Optimists were aware that it would not be an easy year for them (or anyone) but were not prepared to lie down on the job.

The Shriners International

As was now commonplace, there were lots of contests this year. The first one of which we are aware is the Shriners International. In its sixth year, this had now become a major event, not just in Canada but in North America. It was still held in the CNE Stadium in Toronto, drawing crowds of many thousands. Here, this year, one of the major upsets took place. In fourth with a score of seventy-five, were the La Salle Cadets, who defeated De La Salle, in fifth place, by three points. Sixth, seven points back of La Salle, thereby, four behind De La Salle, were the Optimists. That La Salle was on top and the Optimists on the bottom, by a big margin,



Toronto Optimists (Shriners, CNE, 1970)

was the upset here. The top Americans, Racine Kilties, 27th Lancers, and St. Josephs had scores of 78, 76, 76, respectively, not that far ahead of the surging La Salle Cadets. One might think that these results would set the pace for the year, but it was not to be. Changes would come.

Overage Members

De La Salle, this year, was to fare better against the United States Corps than any Canadian Corps had ever done – including the Optimists in their heyday. With a powerful Corps, they were to place eight tenths behind Chicago and 1.6 behind the awesome Casper Troopers. Regardless of this, they were still to experience some difficulty in Canada, in two areas. One was on the field and one was the use of overage people. This issue had often arose in Drum Corps and usually caused bitterness and hostility. It was to do so now.

It began before the Shrine Contest, when the Optimists made the C.D.C.A. aware of their suspicions. No action was taken until a later date, at the North American Invitational, to be exact. At this time, the Optimists received a reply to their enquiries to the C.D.C.A. After the Invitational, the Optimists went over to De La Salle and picked out all the overage members of whom they were aware (five in all). Someone must have done some research. The matter was then brought before the C.D.C.A. for resolution by trial.

Del was given two choices. Pay a fine or forfeit the right to compete in the Provincial and National championships and leave the association. An added penalty was giving up prize money won at the North Americans, as well as relegation to last place in the standings of this event. This would put them in seventh place, behind the Optimists. That they chose to pay the fine is shown by the fact that they did compete in the two contests mentioned. After this, relations between the Optimists and De La Salle, already bad, became worse. Many letters were written to Drum Corps publications concerning this matter, and they were not unanimous in their conclusions.

De La Salle also filed counter charges against the Optimists, which were investigated and thrown out.

Of the many letters written, pro and con, one of the most telling was from a Claude Brisebois of La Salle Cadets. He was an ex-director of this corps and freely admitted that they had used overage members. He maintained that they could not have survived without them. It must be said that such open statements were skirting danger and may have been linked to the fact that he was an ex-director.

With this, the matter came to a close. It can aptly be summed up in a slightly altered version of an old adage – “All’s fair in love and war and, it seems, Drum Corps”.

On The Matter Of “Over-21”

Nov 25/70

By Bob Manhardt

The purpose of this article is to correct mis-statements which have been made, both written and spoken, about DeLaSalle's use of overage members.

Mike Bowman's article on the subject, in the last issue of D.C.N., which purported to state the facts, was incomplete, at least partly inaccurate, and very much misleading. When I read it, I got the distinct impression that his sympathies were with the guilty corps, and that he regarded the Optimists, who brought the situation to light, as the villains of the piece.

A statement made from the floor of the Penn-York convention at Syracuse, contradicting Mike's statement of the penalties levied against Del, and telling the members present what the actual, severe penalties were, was also inaccurate.

I don't know where or how these gentlemen got their information.

I obtained mine directly from the Optimists' Corps Director, via a lengthy long distance telephone call. The information he gave me could be corroborated by D.C.A. officials, should anyone wish to do so. I was told that Mike Bowman had not contacted (Incidentally, I phoned the Optimists – they didn't phone me).

It is clearly understood that De La Salle used overage members in competition, that the Optimists registered a formal protest, and that the C.D.C.A. found De La Salle guilty.

and not before.

The sponsor of the N.A. contest is also Del's bugle instructor. He and Del's drill instructor, as well as the 3 members involved, all denied that the men had marched in the contest. Del then filed counter charges that Opti had used 2 overage members in the same contest.

The next step was a meeting convened the following week by the Ontario Chapter of C.D.C.A. At that meeting, the charges against Opti were thrown out, because it was conclusively proven that one of the accused persons had been in the stands, and the other at the edge of the field, neither one in uniform.

De La Salle was found to be guilty of the charge against them. It happened that the President of the Ontario Chapter of the C.D.C.A. personally knew one of the accused, and had seen him in

Nov. 25, 1970 issue of Drum Corps News



LaSalle Cadets (1970)

Back in the real world of Corps activity, La Salle Cadets won the Provincial Championship. This was a first. Del was two points back and the Optimists another five back, in third. The chances for their regaining the National title did not appear good.

The earlier mentioned lack of information regarding this year now comes into play. Research conducted from an Optimist perspective would not reveal much because not much was being said, or written, about them. One aspect of not being champions or, as it now seemed, even contenders. What happened during most of the season as far as the Optimists were concerned remains unrecorded. Enough is known to be able to say that their drive to regain their title petered out. In fact, it never picked up enough steam to be a serious threat to anyone.

Nationals

De La Salle won the National title, for the second year in a row, edging out La Salle by 0.85. La Salle, though, had given them much reason for concern during the year. The Optimists had not.

The goals that the Optimists had set were maybe a little too high, but in striving for them, they had achieved something. They were still in existence. They hadn't folded up. They weren't in the basement. They were still respectable. There was a good foundation on which to build, and again, aim for the top. They would always do this.



Toronto Optimists (Nationals, 1970)

Corps Banquet

The 9th Annual Awards Dinner was held at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Scarborough. The K of C and Optimists were, it appeared, hand in glove. The affair was sponsored by the Optimist Club of Toronto and was opened by Al Baggs. He had been a member of the club since he had persuaded them to take over the Corps in 1955. For the club, this was a momentous occasion, more than just a dinner. It was a farewell. They were giving up their sponsorship of the Corps and for sound reasons.



Toronto Optimists (Indoor performance, Waterloo, 1970)

Downtown Optimist Club stops sponsoring the Corps

As a sponsor, the club had been flawless, and the fact that the Corps was no longer the champions they had once been, had no bearing at all on their decision. Anything the Corps had needed to keep functioning had been provided without question. Yet direct control had been minimal. Just one person from the Corps was required, once a year, to give an accounting to a club member. Occasionally, a club member would show up at a Corps activity, only to see what was going on. All direction and instruction of the Corps was left to those responsible for it. Many professional sports organizations would envy such a situation.

What had brought this decision to relinquish the reins, of course, was that the Corps had become a victim of its own success and longevity.

In 1955, and even 1958, trips were far less frequent and much less distant. Many shows were local, requiring no buses or other expenses. The growing success and renown of the Optimists, combined with parallel growth of the Drum Corps movement in general, had changed all that. Financial support was now necessary to a degree that the Optimist Club was no longer prepared to underwrite. An activity that, in light of other club activities, was truly a minor endeavour, was becoming a major financial drain. This and this alone was the reason for giving up the sponsorship.

Setbacks, blunders, almost anything you could think of had happened to the Corps in the past. The club had, without fail, always remained stalwart in its support. Such drastic changes are usually not the result of a snap decision, or effected overnight. As early as the month of May 1970, steps had been

taken, in the knowledge of the club’s decision, to provide an alternative. Without these plans being made, the club decision to pull out would have meant the end of the Toronto Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps.



Opti-Corps, the precursor to the Toronto Optimists, at Toronto City Hall in 1956, a year after the Downtown Optimist Club assumed sponsorship



*Toronto Optimists (North Americans, Varsity Stadium, 1970)
During the final year of sponsorship by the Downtown Toronto Optimist Club.*

Creation of The Optimist Club of York-Toronto

The Corps had build up a lot of supporters, friends, and allies, over the years. These now, voluntarily, came into play. A new club, “The Optimist Club of York-Toronto” was formed. Its sole purpose was to support the Corps, which at this stage was enough.

The new club was given an official charter in May of 1970 and even admitted into the ranks of Optimist International. These actions, though adding legitimacy, in no way had a bearing on the function of the new club, which was to solely support the Optimist Corps and its offshoot, the Optimist Cadets.

The new sponsor was at first composed of Corps executive, parents, and alumnae. A field representative of Optimist International, from St. Louis, came up to help organize and select a name. To make it all nice and proper, the new club purchased the Corps from the old club for the princely sum of \$1.00. The first president was Al Tierney. Under his direction, it would flourish, as would the corps. All this, too, without missing a beat, so to speak.

Toronto. May 12, 1970: *Allan J. Tierney, Ancaster, Ontario was elected president of the Optimist Club of York-Toronto at the official organizational meeting of the new service club, May 12, 1970 held at the Commercial Travellers Association Building in Toronto. The Club, formed by 40 business, industry and profession men of Toronto, will hold regular Luncheon meetings on Sunday at 12:00 noon at the Seaway Hotel. The Optimist Club of York-Toronto joins the more than 2600 Optimist Clubs throughout the United States and Canada that are engaged in youth and community service projects.*

Mr. Jim Sonnier, field representative of the international service club organization headquartered in St. Louis, Mo., presided over the official organization meeting and then spent indoctrination session meetings with the new club officers and committees the evenings of May 11th, 13th and 14th. The new Club was sponsored by the Optimist Club of Toronto, Inc. and the President and other representatives of the sponsoring club attended the meeting of May 12th.

The first Boys Work project of the new Club is the sponsorship of the Optimist LANCERS Drum & Bugle Corps of Etobicoke. Mr. Dick Brown is the Corps Director and a Vice-President of the new Club.

On October 1st, 1970 The Toronto Optimists Drum Corps and the Optimist Cadets Drum Corps will be sponsored by the new club.

Back to the Corps Banquet

Having digressed some, we are still at the 1970 Corps Dinner. The guest speaker, always someone of note, was Mr. Tom Kendall, President of Kendall Oil of Canada. He received a thank you from the Corps.

The next speaker, now a major player, as he had been for a while, was Mr. Al Tierney. He gave Corps rings to Vern Johansson and George Tamaki, for years of sticking it out. They had, through thick and thin. Another award, most deserved, was given to Al Baggs for outstanding service to the Corps. For anyone who had read this far, there is really no need of explanation.



George Tamaki (1970)

Bob Barnes, Don Daber, Joe Gianna, Paul Thompson, and Ron Kaiser all gave out membership certificates to their respective sections. Don Daber gave three rookie pins to three new equipment managers. Unsung heroes all, their names repose in the hidden recesses of someone’s archives but not mine. Mr. Daber also mentioned a possible sponsorship connection with one of the boroughs in a couple of years. Strangely enough, this would come about, but not in the way he had in mind at this time.

The evening ended with the announcement of a new Drum Major for next year. Mike Arsenault. Gord Robinson wished all good luck and the Corps song was sung to close the festivities.

For the Corps itself, there were more money raising functions such as the College Bowl, and Santa Claus and Grey Cup parades to perform. The first one included the Optimist Cadets. The last one, all Drum Corps of note in the Toronto area.

Finally, at a Santa Claus parade in Barrie, appeared the Optimist Lancers. The Optimist Lancers? Yes, it was a new Optimist feeder Corps, based in Etobicoke, that had been initiated under Al Tierney and the new Optimist Club. For them, this was the beginning of an unusual existence. These events really signalled the end of activity for the Corps in 1970.

Because the Corps was no longer tops in their region, nor even close to it, they were more or less left out of it. Yet, it was possibly the biggest upheaval in Junior Drum Corps since the introduction of the one valve bugle. It would eventually embrace all Junior Corps, including the Optimists. This, of course, was the founding of Drum Corps International, or D.C.I. It was the creation of a number of the best Junior Corps in the United States. Its story, foundation, and development are best left to detail in another story. Enough to say here that it would change the face of the Junior Corps forever. Nobody who wanted to get anywhere could, now, disregard D.C.I.



Some corps members after a Christmas parade (1970)



Optimist Lancers, Optimists Cadets and Toronto Optimists (Shriners Parade. Toronto, 1970)

“From Toronto... The Optimists!” by Colin Hedworth. Chapter 20. (continued)

It was to become the ruling body. Drum Corps in the United States and Canada had originated from different roots so the C.D.C.A. did not cease to exist, nor did the American Legion, or V.F.W., in the U.S., those most affected by the rise of D.C.I. They just became less relevant and, in Canada, subject to conformity, as, indeed, they had been anyway.

The Optimists were not invited to be a founding member of the organization but De La Salle was. They were the current Canadian Champions and also on par with some of the founding Corps. Because past glories mean little, except to the record books, the Optimists were ignored. Rightly so! They now had no official standing, other than that of the striving contender. And not really considered a very serious one at that.

How have the mighty fallen. Would things stay that way? We shall see.



Toronto Optimists (Madison, WI, 1970)



A few Scores for Optimists and some of our competitors as the summer of 1970 progressed

| Contest ► Corps Name ▼ | Shriners' Int'l (June 20) | Michigan City (July 10) | Toronto (July 18) | AJrC Utica (Aug 1) | North American (Aug 9) | Ontario Provs (Aug 22) | Nationals Ottawa (Sept 12) |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Toronto Optimists | 68.875 | 61.150 | 74.150 | 64.500 | 66.650 | 74.580 | 77.750 |
| De La Salle | 72.555 | | 77.550 | | 78.400 | 79.550 | 84.000 |
| LaSalle Cadets | 75.225 | | 80.600 | 73.100 | 72.800 | 81.850 | 83.150 |
| Cavaliers | | 77.550 | | | 79.350 | | |
| Kilties | 78.675 | | | | | | |
| Santa Clara | | 77.600 | | | | | |
| St Joe's (Batavia) | 76.050 | | | 74.650 | 75.350 | | |
| Troopers | | | | | 80.950 | | |

**For a list of scores for this or other years, go to our website:
<https://www.TorontoOptimistsHistory.ca/>**

Viscounts Drum & Bugle Corps

By Diane Montreuil

WAS A MEMBER of the “Viscounts” Drum & Bugle Corps in Montréal, Québec. I believe the corps was formed in 1960 and sponsored by Bobby Gilbert (deceased Nov. 2022). The Corps was made up of young women and boys with about 50 members.

I participated from 1967 to 1971 and carried a rifle in the colour guard.

The rehearsals were about three times a week because of the many competitions in Québec, Ontario and the USA. The training was tough, but that’s what it took to be successful in competition. Your uniform, boots, shako and all equipment needed to be impeccable. You didn’t want to lose points at inspection.

The rifles we used were not replicas or “show” rifles, they were real (disabled), and heavy. I remember when I first started, practising spinning my rifle over my head, it went up and unfortunately came down on my head. That really hurt. With much practice, I became quite efficient maneuvering my rifle and working in unison with the other members of the guard.

We travelled by bus and became very adept at sleeping during those long hours on the road. On overnight trips we were often billeted in a high school gym. There was the usual pandemonium and high jinks with 50 or more high-spirited corps members eager to rehearse and compete.

On one of our trips to the USA the bus got lost and we arrived late for the competition. It was a bit of a scramble, but all was OK in the end. I’m sure this has happened to most Corps at one time or another.

I remember this happening in competition. When I was doing a pirouette with my rifle and the tip (part of the barrel assembly) came off and flew up in the air and fortunately landed on the ground, not a corps member or a judge. Oooops, we lost a few points and Bobby wasn’t too happy with me.

My time in the Corps was such an amazing experience at a young age, teaching us leadership, teamworking, camaraderie and family.

The travelling, the laughter and new adventures are something that I will carry forever.

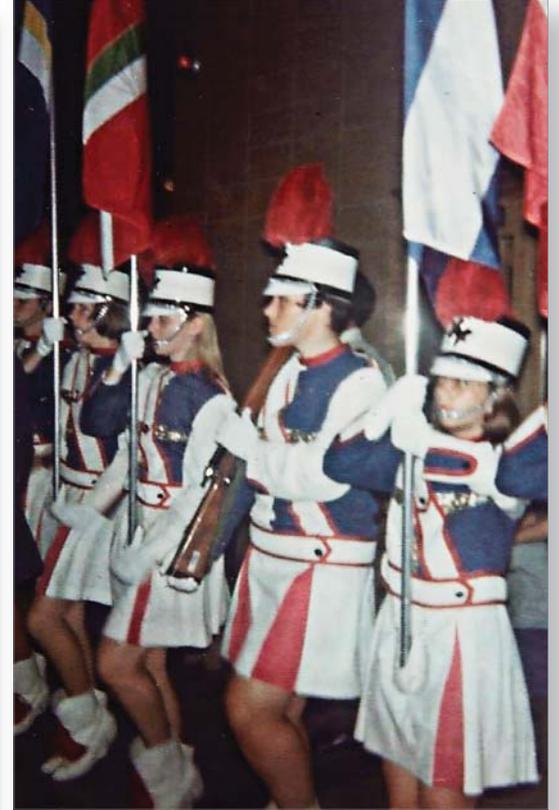


Diane Montreuil

Spotlight: On Viscounts Drum Corps from Montréal (continued)



Viscounts



Viscounts



Viscounts

Memories of The Toronto Optimists

by Stephanie Michaela Cooper

(Stephanie was known as Steve when she marched with the Optimists)

The Coopers

I'M SURE MANY of you from the 1960s remember the Cooper brothers, Rick, Ron and Steve; however, our family's connection to the Optimists began well before any of us actually joined the corps. The connection with the Toronto Optimists began with our cousin Robert, who joined the Optimists in 1959.

"Bob" saw a business opportunity in the Drum Corps universe and, in 1960, left the corps to pursue that dream. In 1961, Bob started Sunhill Records, with Don Daber creating the artwork for the record jackets. In addition, Bob worked with Don to create Optimists' Booster Table as an additional product line. During both the Ontario and National Championships, my dad and I worked under the stands at the Booster Table in Waterloo.



Sunhill LP of the 1960 field shows of top Juniors and Seniors

That same year, I joined the Bantam Optimists, a Parade Corps and feeder corps to the Toronto Optimists or, as we called it, the "Junior Corps". Long-time Optimist Fred Johnson was the Corps Director while his wife, Aileen, did an outstanding job running the Booster Club.

Fred "Freddie" Lombard from the Junior Corps was assisting the Bantams, teaching them to march.

Freddie would often invite members of the Bantams to see

the "big corps" as they left on their competition trips. The Cooper Family would regularly go to the CNE parking lot to see the Juniors head off to competition. After joining the Junior Corps, the luggage rack on a Gray Coach bus would become my sleeping quarters!

A year later, in 1962, I was on the field with the Bantams in the Standstill Competition. Vern Johansson was our Drum Major and a man whose name I don't remember came out onto the field to direct the Old Wooden Bucket in concert.

The Bantams came second to a Junior "B" Corps who had dropped down in class to ensure a win. Unfortunately, my first contest with Optimists had been a loss. Something hit home while I was walking back to the high school dressing room. Someone from the Junior Corps asked me if we won and I, sadly, responded with "we lost". His answer went something like "work harder".



Rick and Stephanie Cooper (1962)

The Coopers and The Optimists (continued)

I watched the finals that night hoping The Toronto Optimists (Junior A) would score 90. Fleetwood Records recorded Jim McConkey's "you better bleed on the finish line" in full stereo. They beat their closest competitor by over six points; however, with a score of 88.4, that magic 90.0 eluded them!

In 1962, my brother Rick joined the Bantams. Ron, my other brother, having achieved everything he wanted out of Scouting, went directly to the Junior "A" Corps in 1963.

Mr. Daber invited me to join the Junior "A" corps in 1964. Don had been looking to shore up the numbers

and had scouted us as we practiced in the Ted Reeve parking lot. Vern and I were called up.

By 1964, Drum Major Jim McConkey had moved on and Andy Henderson moved up from Guard Captain to replace him. Gene Chepswick became the new Guard Captain. The lineage of Guard Captain during my years with The Optimists was Ivor Bramley, Andy Henderson, Gene Chepswick, Guy Vezina, Ron Cooper and eventually, me.

The Colour Guard

I have many memories of my time with the Toronto Optimists and my days in the Colour Guard.

The Optimists were being booed wherever we appeared in Canada (a result of winning for so

long) while many Del supporters were becoming aggressive with their appreciation. After rehearsal, Gene called the Colour Guard together to rehearse a treat during retreat. After all the ceremony and score announcements, Del, who came second, marched by, as is normal, to exit the field.

The Guard went from Parade Rest to Present Arms to Parade Rest in three manoeuvres with perfect coordination. Don and Ivor were called onto the carpet immediately after we left the field. Del's Drum Major claimed we had failed to salute their colours. Yes, it was that fast. I was not privy to the conversation, but Ivor came back, his red hair ablaze, roasting Gene and his Colour Guard. Saying, "I understand you guys actually rehearsed this". Damn right we did—and it was perfect.

Another moment was in Kingston, NY when the Retreat announcer took control of the microphone. The announcer commanding the assembled Colour Guards to "Order Arms and Parade Rest". My Colour Guard didn't move. One member exclaimed, "only the Captain orders this Guard".

During the same Retreat Ceremony my policy dictated that Canada's National Flag carrier would remain at Attention, proudly flying the holstered Canadian Maple Leaf (in later years, Ben Burrage rigged a flag pole extension, enabling the Maple Leaf to fly several feet higher). The announcer talked about the Maple Leaf flying high and proud and said the US Corps should take notice.



John Diamond and Ron Cooper (1964)



Rick Cooper and Don Daber working on GCC (1966)

The Coopers and The Optimists (continued)

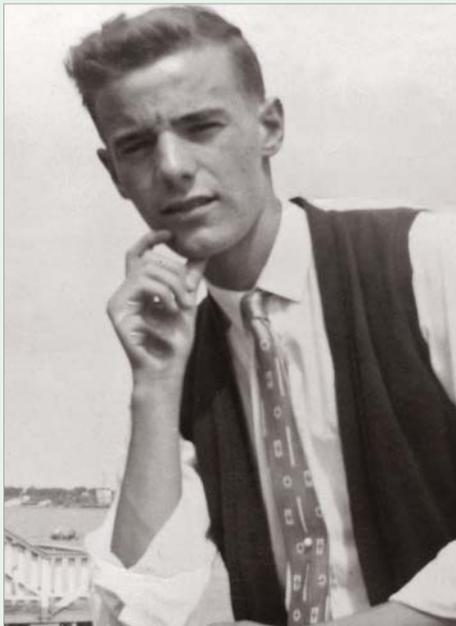
In Shawinigan, during the Quebec Crisis, I included the “Fleur-de-lis”, the Quebec Provincial flag with the Ontario Provincial flag in the National Colour Party. The Quebecers were cheering our National Colour Party. They can make a lot of noise inside a hockey rink. It was years ahead of Joe Clark’s “community of communities”.

Off the field and after practice, many of us would assemble at the Thompson house or the Cooper house while parents were away on holiday. Those previously mentioned Sunhill records would rock the neighbourhood into the early morning. Rick got into publishing, helping Don publish Green Capsule Comments.

Winter Colour Guard

At some point, Jack Roberts, who had marched with both Grantham and the Optimists, became the creator and instructor of our drill. I remember Ron drove to Jack’s place in Burlington to move little metal soldiers around a large table, plotting the drill show revisions of the summer show. On a scorching hot summer day, after the Optimists had experienced a loss, Jack held a Saturday practice at Keating field.

We worked for hours and hours in the sun, going over and over the drill, until we got it right! Jack ended the rehearsal; however, we continued practicing for a while. We were back practicing at Keating field the next day!



Jack Roberts



Clare Reid presents Championship to Ron Cooper (1968)

On a visit to Chicago, Jack got to experience the Winter Colour Guard competition circuit, Chicago style, with no drummer. He returned to Toronto, excited and hoping to start a Winter Guard. A group of us drove to Rochester in two cars. We witnessed the colour guard of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the current King of the Hill. We knew what our Colour Guard would do in winter.

Vern joined the Guard and we rehearsed downstairs at the Shrine Temple. In place of a drummer, on every fourth step we would rhythmically flat-foot stamp our right foot. Later, that became one of our signature moves.

The existing Guard Champion was the girl Colour Guard of the Chessman Drum Corps from St. Catharines. During this time the Coopers met the Kirkpatricks, all members of Chessmen’s guard. There was Brian on drum, Nancy on flag and Terri on rifle. Our guards competed against each other and the Coopers got to know the Kirkpatrick family. Our first Ontario Championship appearance was in St. Catharines, inside Chessman’s building. We performed Jack’s show with our signature “shotgun” presentation. The Presentation was the placing of flag poles into an upright cylinder (thank you, again, to Ben for his fabrication). The tradition

The Coopers and The Optimists (continued)

had been to present one-at-a-time. The intent of Optimist's "shotgun" approach was to generate one loud bang, with all poles being placed at the same time. Failing to present all at once would be a major deduction with this manoeuvre. We nailed it.

Sound was a big part of our show, aided by my hand claps and in unison bouncing the flag pole tips on the floor as we marched replacing the drummer. As we marched off the floor, that fourth step was extra loud as we passed Chessman. That was intimidation at work! We won the competition. We were Champions, the first time out of the box.

Our next competition was in Rochester, NY, the home of the Aquinas guard. Aquinas witnessed our rehearsal and the shotgun presentation. Optimist became "the influencer" as Aquinas introduced "shotgun" into their night show.

A full uniform inspection by a Marine Corps member was part of the judging. We had preened and trimmed every little thread in the dressing room. I had adopted the wearing of Hai Karate cologne for all of us. The Marine noted on the score sheet that any distinct odour would be a deduction; however, it was uniform, so there was no foul.



Toronto Optimists circuit guard after winning their second straight National Championship (1969)

L - R: Ric Brown, John O'Leary, Stephanie and Rick Cooper, Bernie Roelcke, Steve Jarvis, a couple of Gilberts (?) and the kid with the braces in the front behind the trophy on the left is Greg Oxenham

Hearing "from Toronto Canada the Optimists" always made the weary travel effects disappear.

Jack had studied the rules and designed a much smaller banner to top our flag poles. Complaints were sent to the Rules Committee who dictated that, even though it was within the rules, it created an advantage. A new rule for banner size was written and implemented. A big "Thank You" goes to the moms who created our new and rules compliant banners.



Painting of Rick Cooper by Don Daber

Winning

At Nationals retreat, I won the GE trophy, which normally was awarded to a drummer or a runner-up to the winner. I accepted the award with much external appreciation. The judges announced the winner. From Toronto... The Optimists. A reflex reaction when standing to attention caused me to snap the top off my trophy and it fell to the floor. I picked up the pieces and handed them to whoever was next to me and gladly accepted our National title.

The trophy would later be presented back to me by Rick and Steve Jarvis, but with a woman bowler on top and inscribed to our "all girl Colour Guard Captain". Little did they know my gender dysphoria!

The Coopers and The Optimists (continued)

In 1968, Ron came back as Assistant Drum Major for Nationals, having previously aged out. 1968 was tough; however, the Optimists “never give up” attitude prevailed and number eleven National Championship was ours!

Tough to lose

1969 was a tough year and nobody gave up. We closed the gap but ended up in second place. Varsity Stadium in Toronto was the site of my first Nationals win in 1964 and as Guard Captain Lansdowne Stadium was my toughest loss.

Del and Optimist were at opposite ends of the field and the second place announcement was made. Don was in front on the sidelines yelling, “You are going right to exit the field”. I had my Guard make a quarter turn and salute the colours of Del. My Guard scored a ten-out-of-ten with

“amazing banners” written across the score sheet. Individual accomplishments were meaningless to me with losing what had been so hard fought for since 1958.

The winter of 1970 brought another stunning loss at an indoor winter show, losing to the Mets with their French GE. The year proved to be too hard for me and I disagreed with Management on how to rebuild. They asked me to leave.

My brother, Rick, and Bernie Roelcke came back part way through the 1970 season in order to put together a Rifle Show for Nationals.

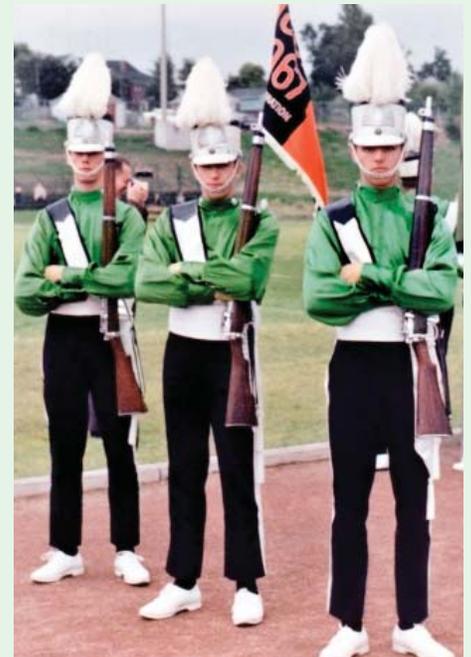
The year ended, as did the Cooper’s time with the Optimists.

Stephanie

Stephanie, the author, lives in Toronto and is an advocate for her community.



The Coopers: Rick, Ron and Stephanie (1968)



Rick Cooper, Steve Jarvis and Bernie Roelcke (1969)

Looking back at 1969

by Brian Hogan

Up to Our Cumberbunds in Rookies

I didn't join the corps until the late winter of 1969, which was just in time to join the colour guard for their successful trip to Ottawa for the National Circuit Guard Championships. The rookie crop of '69 was pretty impressive and large. It included such luminaries as Peter Byrne, Ric Brown, Greg Oxenham, Réal Garneau, Gilles Paquin, Rick Roussel, Dana Burrage and Derek Branton (who ended up winning "Rookie of the Year"). I would estimate that something in the area of 40% of the membership was new and I think this made the 'old guys' a little nervous. The good news for them was that just about everyone got a rookie.

Camp Thundercloud

We traditionally held camp over the Victoria Day weekend and I can't remember the name of the camp or where it was, but what I do remember is rain, red mud and the worst sunburn I've ever had.

It rained from the time we got there until Monday morning, with a brief respite on Saturday night,



Don Daber and 1969 guard members

during which the old guys initiated us poor rookies. There was talk of a rookie revolt, but nothing ever came of it. We managed to make it through most of Jack Roberts' drill by the time we broke camp, under unseasonably hot, sunny weather.



Toronto Optimists (1969)

The brass arrangements were penned by Barry Bell and instructed by Joe Gianna, while the percussion was done by Ron Kaiser, with assistance from 'Scotty' MacDonald. Vern Johansson was the Drum Major and Steve Cooper was the Guard Captain. After wallowing around in the mud (did I mention it was red?) and arriving home, my mother washed my cloths, only to have my shirt and nice new white sneakers come out a rather sexy pink (or was it lavender rose?). Needless to say, they got tossed.

Caution, Objects in the Mirror May Be Closer Than You Think – or – There's Going to be a Riot!!

I believe we started the year behind both De La Salle and Cadets La Salle, but gathered momentum as the year went on and soon we had passed Cadets La Salle and had Del squarely in our sights.

We did an exceptionally long weekend in the mid-west that year with a contest in Michigan City, Indiana, followed by another in Woodstock, Illinois the next day. What I remember about Michigan City was seeing the Cavaliers for the first time and what I remember about Woodstock was Don Daber

Looking Back at 1969 (continued)

chanting “There’s going to be a riot... There’s going to be a riot!!!”

After the contest was over, we were changing in a school auditorium, along with some of the other corps. Nisei Ambassadors (I think – or- it was Norwood Park Imperials) were on the stage playing through their show. Being a green-as-grass rookie, I saw nothing unusual about this. However, this was apparently being done so that they wouldn’t jump us.

Here, to the best of my recollection, is what happened: the day before in Michigan City, they had beaten us by a small margin and that day, in Woodstock, we had beaten them by a not-so-small margin. For whatever reason, they blamed us and wanted to duke it out. If it had been section on section, I don’t know how we would have made out against their guard – those girls looked pretty tough!



Nisei Ambassadors (1969)

No Way We Let Boy Scouts Beat Us!

We traveled down the long road to Marion, Ohio for the U.S. Open. Man, I didn’t know there were so many drum corps! Prelims were held over the better part of two days and after their conclusion, we found ourselves in third place, behind only the Kilties and the Madison Scouts. Granted, most

of the ‘Big’ corps weren’t there, but we still felt pretty good.



Madison Scouts (1969)

Some of us wondered, though, who were these “Madison Scouts” anyway and there was no way we were getting beaten by “Boy Scouts”! We didn’t, but we did still end up in third, 10 points behind Kilties and a couple of tenths behind the Argonne Rebels and their fabulous, Sandra Opie instructed horn line.

It Almost Was a Riot!!

Titusville, Pennsylvania saw us close the gap with Del to 3/10ths! The contest coordinators had made the mistake of billeting us and Del in the same school, with Del in the gym and us in the boys’ dressing room. Unless you were a part of it, you can’t imagine the tension that existed between these two great corps. In 1968 Del felt they had their first championship within their grasp, only to have it snatched away by a more than game Optimists Corps. Del was determined to keep that from happening again. As for us, we didn’t want to be the ones to break the winning streak – it was unimaginable.

After the contest, Del had arrived at the school before us and they were in the gym chanting “We’re number one, we’re number one”. Rumour has it that an “innocent” comment was made by someone in the Optimists. Suddenly everyone in both

Looking Back at 1969 (continued)

corps poured out of the front door of the school, eyeballing one another, with blood on their minds and malice in their hearts. All this powder keg needed was a spark, but cooler heads prevailed – I think they belonged to Don Daber and Brother X. Thankfully, everyone went back to their respective corners, unbloodied.

Disappointment in the Hub of Democracy

By the time Nationals rolled around in Ottawa, we were banging on all cylinders. We had, in true Optimists' tradition, worked our tails off and had closed to within .15 of Del the week prior to Nationals.

We were to do a couple of run-throughs in the afternoon prior to Finals, on a field across the road from the hotel, but part way through the second run (I believe), Jack threw up his hands in disgust and declared us not fit to participate in a dog show, let alone a contest of this magnitude. He told us to get off the field and think about what we were going to do that night.

When we walked off of the Lansdowne Park turf, I believe that, to a man, we felt we had left it all on



De La Salle (1969)

the field, only to hear “The first place score is 80.85 and the second place score is 80.80 – in second place.....” You know the rest.

It Wasn't All Bad

What I took out of that year was a sense of purpose, a new work ethic, a sense of belonging and fast friendships which have endured to this day.

Do I wish we had won? You bet, but I wouldn't trade the values, friendships and memories I garnered for anything. I gained more than I lost. Maybe it was the best of times.



Toronto Optimists (1969)

The Toronto Optimists (Lee-Enfield) Rifles and those who tossed them.

Doug MacKenzie suggested this as an idea and supplied most of the names.

Between 1958 and 1970 the Toronto Optimists' rifle line carried army surplus, non-firing Lee-Enfield 303s. The weight was approximately nine pounds – without the bayonet! During the 1958 season, the wooden parts of the rifles were painted white but, after 1958, the corps' rifles reverted to plain wood. The metal parts were chrome plated.

Between 1960 through 1963 they used fixed bayonets on these rifles. Each rifleman wore a leather holster on their right side, The holster included a metal chain which wrapped around their leg. In addition to tossing the rifles with bayonets mounted, the rifles also did a duck and spin routine.

At one corps rehearsal, a bayonet became detached from the rifle, flew through the air, and stuck into the ground in front of Mr Baggs, Optimists' Corps Director. He was less than pleased!

Optimists' riflemen were a tough breed. In 1963, a spinning rifle, with a bayonet attached, hit Ron Cooper in the arm. This event ended the use of fixed bayonets. When Bill McNabb, the rifle instructor, heard about Ron's mishap, his sympathetic response was "Rookie!". A few years later, Ron Cooper was, once again, hit in the arm by a rifle. He was taken to the hospital in Hackensack, New Jersey. The admittance sheet read "hit by rifle".



John Diamond (1964)

The doctor in the ER said "no gun shot wound, he can wait". This was during the riots of 1966.

Brian Hogan remembers this from 1970:

"In 1970 after '69 Nationals, the rifle line was made up of Rick Cooper, Steve Jarvis, Bernie Roelcke and a couple of guys recruited from the flag line, including me.

If memory serves me, Rick and Steve left the Corps sometime before the competitive season and Bernie and I were left. I have to admit that I was nowhere near the rifle god my predecessors were and early in the season I suffered from what I can only describe as the 'yips', dropping my rifle during shows to the point where the judges would no longer give it back to me. I still bear the physical (no nail on my right baby toe) and emotional scars to this day.

Mercifully, later in the season, Rick and Steve returned to the Corps, I went back on flag and the day (and my sanity) were saved. At least - that's the way I remember it."



Ron Cooper's 303 rifle and bayonet, later inherited by his brother, Rick

Optimists who carried the original Lee-Enfield Rifles (continued)

Here is a list of Optimists riflemen who carried the 303s:

- 1958** Dennis DeCarli, Mike Layton,
Roy Lawrence and Tom Johnson,
- 1959, 1960** Ivor Bramley, Len Perrin
- 1961** Al (Ole) Miller, Andy Henderson
- 1962** Al (Ole) Miller, Andy Henderson,
Bill McNabb
- 1963** Bill McNabb, Chuck Clutterbuck
and Jim Bedford
- 1964** John Diamond and Nelson Duffy
- 1965** John Diamond, Ron Cooper
- 1966** Bill Kane, Larry Greenwood,
Marty Palmer , Ron Cooper,
- 1967** Bill Kane, Larry Greenwood
- 1968, 1969** Bernie Roelcke Rick Cooper,
Steve Jarvis
- 1970** Bernie Roelcke and Rick Cooper

I believe it was after 1970 when the corps started using mock wooden rifles.



1959: Ivor Bramley and Len Perrin on rifle (Guelph)



1960: Ivor Bramley
& Len Perrin



1958: Rifles L-R: Mike Layton, Tom Johnson, Roy Lawrence and Dennis DeCarli

Optimists who carried the original Lee-Enfield Rifles (continued)



*Left: the 1960 rifles, Ivor Bramley and Len Perrin,
Right: the 1961 rifles, Al Miller and Andy Henderson*



*1961: Andy Henderson and Al Miller toss their 303s
with Bill McNabb, soon to be on rifle, behind Al*



*1962: Al Miller, Andy Henderson and Bill McNabb,
Toronto Optimists rifles with fixed bayonets*

Optimists who carried the original Lee-Enfield Rifles (continued)



1964: Nelson Duffy and John Diamond on rifle (Racine)



1965: John Diamond and Ron Cooper



1963: Bill McNabb, Tom Bedford and Chuck Clutterbuck on rifle

Optimists who carried the original Lee-Enfield Rifles (continued)

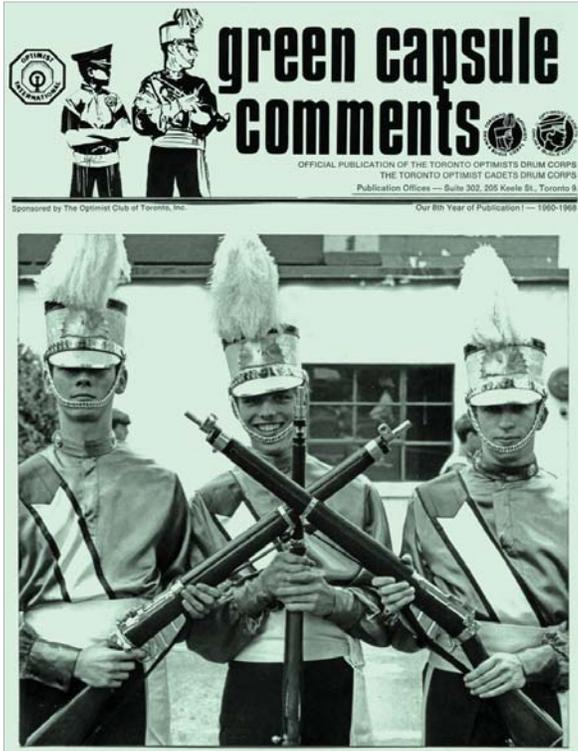


1966: Left: Ron Cooper, Marty Palmer; Right: Bill Kane, Larry Greenwood



1967: Rifles, Bill Kane (L) and Larry Greenwood, are in satins (Sarnia)

Optimists who carried the original Lee-Enfield Rifles (continued)



1968 Rifles: Rick Cooper, Steve Jarvis and Bernie Roelcke



1969: Rick Cooper, Bernie Roelcke and Steve Jarvis



1970 Rifles: (Madison, WI)



1969: Steve Jarvis and Bernie Roelcke

Noel Bramley

— March 16, 2023

Corps: Toronto Optimists

It is with great sadness that I announce the unexpected death of my friend and brother, Noel Bramley, on March 16, 2023. He was a baritone horn player in The Optimists. Remaining a Corps enthusiast the rest of his life, Noel enjoyed a very long friendship with Steve Bailey of De La Salle; they, quite often, crossed continents to meet up.

Recently, fellow Optimist, Mel Dey, forwarded to us a video of “a modern Drum Corps” which Noel and I enjoyed. This was followed days later by us listening to a recording of mid-fifties New York Skyliners and St. Vincents Cadets of Bayonne N.J. Yes, enthusiasts to the end. Fond memories indeed. The Drum Corps movement, a facet in a colourful life.

Noel is survived by his wife, Carol, daughters Gemma and Melissa and four grandchildren. *(by Ivor Bramley)*

Noel We Remember!



L-R: Bert Hoflick, Jim McConkey, Doug Yarker, Rick Robida and Noel Bramley (Mundelein, IL, 1963)



Len Perrin, Ivor Bramley and Noel Bramley (Ship Inn, Near Rochester, Kent, England)



Toronto Optimists (Batavia, NY, 1969)

Toronto Optimists History - Newsletter: Staff and contributors

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HOW TO REACH US

CORRECTIONS: We tried to get everything right. If not, please let us know:
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Please submit your material to Bob Carell at: Toronto_Optimist@rogers.com in one of the following formats:

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Or mail: Bob Carell:
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